

STOURBRIDGE CHRONICLE



Thursday, December 12, 2013

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Horse crisis

Rescue bid for animals tied up and left to die

See Page 3



Isn't that?

Lookalikes get married in front of celebrity doubles

See Page 12



Worst defeat

DKs are in the doldrums after a 17-try hammering

Sport - See Pages 31 & 32



Council to continue charities' subsidy

THOUSANDS of pounds of business rates will continue to be paid on behalf of charities and not-for-profit organisations in Dudley after council chiefs voted to keep covering the cost.

More than 300 organisations across the borough will benefit from the scheme, which was approved by members of the cabinet after a review.

Hospice

Members agreed to cover £240,000 worth of business rates.

Among the charities to receive the support is Stourbridge-based Mary Stevens Hospice. It will save them an estimated £20,000 a year.

The council carried out a review to see if cutbacks could be made as it battles to save millions of pounds over the next three years. But it was proposed that the council continue to offer the same level of support as previous years.

Members voted to make an amendment to the current policy to award entitlements for one financial year at a time, rather than indefinitely, as is the current position.

Mandatory relief already covers 80 per cent of business rates for charities and amateur sports clubs, which is funded half by the council and half by the Government.

Shoppers park free

FREE car parking is being offered to shoppers in Dudley on the next two Saturdays before Christmas.

Charges are being suspended in all council-run car parks in town centres across the Dudley borough on December 14 and 21 to encourage more shoppers to buy locally.

Transport boss Councillor Khurshid Ahmed said: "The festive season is a busy time for everyone and we want to help local businesses and shoppers as much as we can."

'WE WILL FACE THIS TOGETHER'

Report by Alex Ross

GINNY was sipping cocktails in the sun on a holiday in Benidorm with husband Colin when she received the first shot of devastating news.

"Ginny, I've got some bad news, I've got cancer," said her best friend and neighbour Maggie over the phone. "The routine scan showed up a tumour, I'm now getting the breast removed." The news hit her like a hammer blow. Then her thoughts turned to the results of her own mammogram, carried out before the holiday.

Her worst fears were realised when she returned home to Brierley Hill. There, on the kitchen cabinet, were two letters from Russells Hall Hospital. "I knew straight away, there was not any doubt in my mind," says the 53-year-old.

"After what happened to Maggie and the letters at home, I knew, I just knew. My husband

Colin tried to tell me it was nothing but a check on a cyst but I knew.

"It was awful, a real week from hell, it felt like everything was coming down around me."

Ginny Weaver's fears were confirmed when she had a biopsy at the hospital and a further meeting with a specialist who delivered the devastating news that she had a tumour on her breast bone.

Meanwhile, Maggie Taylor by this stage had taken the option for a mastectomy, deciding to have the breast removed rather than risk her tumour growing further.

Crying

The 66-year-old had been called for an appointment at Russells Hall Hospital following her mammography, taken a week before Ginny's. Following further tests, she too had been told the news by a specialist.

"I thought the world had stopped. I was there with my friend Anne Hewitt, and we broke down together, both of us crying. It was terrible," she said.

Maggie was then taken home in Plan Road, Brierley Hill, to her husband Barry.

"I walked in and told him and he broke down too. He says 'we will get through it, we have to'. But we cried all that first night, the next day too. I was in shock for a couple of weeks, it was always there in the back of my mind."

When she found out Ginny also had breast cancer, she was further saddened. "I couldn't believe it. Three doors apart and a fortnight between the two of us," she said.

But as they begin treatment, the friends say their relationship has strengthened as they set out determined to battle the disease together.

This week both women went through their third chemotherapy sessions. The pair accompany each other, being taken in the car by Ginny's husband Colin.



Friends and neighbours Maggie Taylor, left and Ginny Weaver, both diagnosed with breast cancer

Their treatment will end early next year and more tests will then be carried out to discover if the cancer has gone.

Maggie, a retired assembly worker from Bird Stevens in Quarry Bank, said: "This is something we have to do. We have to stay positive and do it together."

"We have lost our hair and she has given up work, but we have kept our friendship, and it has strengthened. That is important right now."

Ginny, who hopes to return as a senior supervisor at The Copthorne Hotel in Brierley Hill, said: "We are unlucky but lucky we have each other for support. We have both started well and we're really hopeful we can get through this."

Last week, Maggie's brother-in-law, Les Taylor, aged 56, took part in a charity head-shave with friend Dennis Andrews at The Rose and Crown in Brierley Hill to raising £1,500 for Breast Cancer Research.

Heating helpline calls are soaring

THE number of calls to a helpline offering support to people struggling to keep their homes warm have shot up by 50 per cent.

Dudley Council has seen a sharp rise in people contacting its winter warmth service since October.

There have been 162 calls and requests during the past two months date, compared with just 50 during the same period last year.

Fears

Rising energy bills and fears about severe winter weather have led to more people seeking help, says council bosses.

The service was set up two years ago in a bid to reduce the number of people who died as a result of being cold in their homes.

It is estimated there are around 200 such deaths in the borough a year.

Portable heaters, blankets and hot water bottles are provided through crisis funding, while people are assisted with their energy debts and helped to switch to the cheapest supplier.

The scheme also arranges for local 'befriending' services to make regular visits to people who may be at risk of becoming isolated during cold weather.

Contact Dudley's winter warmth helpline on 01384 817086.

Motorist is charged

A MAN has been charged with causing death by dangerous driving after a crash in which a church minister and his wife died.

Rev John Bedford, who served at Baptist churches in Oldbury and Coseley, and his wife Audrey were killed when their Volvo was involved in a collision with an Audi in Oldbury in May.

Police charged 23-year-old Damon Richardson, of Church Hill, Frankley Green, with two counts of causing death by dangerous driving. He was bailed.

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CONTACT US

Have you got a story or an event you want covered? The Chronicle and the Express & Star have a team of reporters covering Halesowen who can help:

Tom Mason: 01902 319550
tom.mason@expressandstar.co.uk
Charlotte Lilley: 01902 319688
charlotte.lilley@expressandstar.co.uk
Will Ackermann: 01543 465305
will.ackermann@expressandstar.co.uk
Heather Large: 01384 353203
heather.large@expressandstar.co.uk
Louise Jew: 01384 353201
louise.jew@expressandstar.co.uk
Alex Ross: 01384 353207
alex.ross@expressandstar.co.uk
Andrew Turton: 01384 353202
andrew.turton@expressandstar.co.uk
Lee Watton: 01384 353230
lee.watton@expressandstar.co.uk

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Sports: E-mail: chronsport@expressandstar.co.uk
Photographic John Sambrooks
Tel: 01902 319431

Advertising:

Nikki Cope
Tel: 01902 319573 E-mail: n.cope@expressandstar.co.uk

Emma Parkes
Tel: 01384 353234 E-mail: e.parkes@expressandstar.co.uk

Distribution: Paul Jones
Tel: 01902 319990 E-mail: p.jones@expressandstar.co.uk

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Old fashioned Christmas has growing appeal

THESE days the festive season means homes are full of the latest gadgets and flashing LED lights. But a traditional Christmas, where families gather around a roaring fire and stockings are lined up on the hearth, can still be found here in the Black Country.

Historic venues in the area say they are experiencing a rush of people hankering to swap the stress of a modern day Christmas for the warm glow of an old fashioned Yuletide.

Whether it's the 'Downton Abbey effect' or the weariness of Christmas shoppers tired of traips-

ing the shops, the appeal of the vintage Christmas is growing. Carols around the fireside and eating mince pies by candlelight – places where these are on offer are proving very popular with families.

The Black Country Living Museum in Dudley is offering people the chance to see what Christmas was like before the arrival of late night shopping, games consoles and multi-channel TV.

From December 19 to 23, there will be bell-ringers, carol singers, street organs and a brass band, all performing against the backdrop of the candlelit Victorian village.

Lucy Wakelin, director of communications at the Tipton Road attraction, said: "Stepping back in time brings a certain kind of magic to the normally frantic days before Christmas – time out for all the family to enjoy the run up to the big day."

Festive foods are also being served up, including handmade fudge, hot roasted chestnuts, toffee apples and, of course, real ale and mulled wine.

Tickets cost £15.50 for adults, £12.50 for senior citizens and £7.45 for young people and must be pre-booked. Call 0121 557 9643.

Fast food giant in bid for approval

FAST food giant McDonald's is making a fresh bid for planning permission for a £200,000 revamp of one of its restaurants, in a move that could create jobs.

Bosses want to create a dual lane drive-thru and overhaul the car park at the site in Bromsgrove Road, Halesowen. But council officers had concerns about the scheme and originally refused to give the go-ahead.

Now the restaurant has submitted a revised set of proposals, which bosses say would reduce waiting times for customers and help to cut noise and congestion.

Information

Around five jobs will be created on top of 15 already provided by the restaurant extending its opening hours.

Planners at Dudley Council had refused their first application after they said the fast food giant failed to provide enough information on noise levels and how the new layout would work.

McDonald's now says it has launched a new bid to get approval for the project.

A spokesman said: "The planning officer requested a couple of minor changes; mainly that we conduct a tree survey and also install an improved acoustic fence."

"We've accepted both these comments but the proposed scheme otherwise remains the same."

"The dual lane drive-thru, and reconfiguration of the car park represents a significant investment, through which we expect to reduce waiting times, noise and congestion, and create in the region of five jobs."

Bosses said the 'side-by-side ordering' would reduce the build up of cars.

Two residents in nearby Grange Road had objected to the original plan.

Memory tree is to be lit up

PEOPLE can help raise money for a charity while remembering deceased loved ones at Christmas.

Age Concern Stourbridge & Halesowen are holding a switch-on event for their memory tree tomorrow, Friday. It will take place at the Elton Centre in St John's Road, Stourbridge, from 4pm. Attending the ceremony will be the Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Alan Finch, and Stourbridge MP Margot James.

Little Star Jake fights cancer with bravery

YOUNG Jake Ballinger's parents thought he was suffering from a nasty bout of flu when he was not his usual chirpy self.

But when doctors ordered a series of tests they were left stunned when it was revealed that he had developed leukaemia. However, the six-year-old schoolboy from Kingswinford now faces a brighter future and has been recognised for his bravery by a cancer charity.

Jake, who attends Glynne Primary School, was diagnosed with leukaemia in March this year and has suffered osteoporosis as a side effect of his treatment.

Awards

He is facing his ordeal with such bravery that his mother Rachel put him forward for one of Cancer Research UK's Little Star awards. The awards celebrate the courage of all children who confront cancer and are backed by famous names, including pop sensation Emeli Sande and Wolverhampton-born soul singer Beverley Knight, who is starring in West End musical The Bodyguard.

Jake's symptoms began last Christmas when the whole Ballinger family went down with flu and Jake, then five, seemed to be suffering particularly badly.

But his 'flu' didn't clear up and he didn't want to walk to school because it made his legs ache. When he developed swelling in his back and chest, his parents Rachel and Mark Ballinger took him to Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital.

Jake was referred to Birmingham Children's Hospital where doctors initially suspected an infection. He was given a series of blood tests and eventually sent to specialists for a bone marrow test.

"They said 'Have you ever heard of leukaemia?'" said Mrs Ballinger. "Well I'd

by Andrew Turton

heard of it but I never expected it in my child."

"It was a total shock when we got a diagnosis of Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia. The good news is that it was a low risk type," she explained.

Jake has been through the intensive phase of his chemotherapy and now faces lower dose 'maintenance' therapy until 2015.

"During the worst part of the treatment he was completely wiped out and in hospital. He lost loads of weight and of course he lost his hair. There was one occasion when he said 'I don't want to be me', but apart from that he has borne it all with such bravery."

"Jake is high on life now that the worst is over. His hair's grown back, his eyes shine and he's got his sparkle back."

"He has to be very careful about physical activity because he has osteoporosis as a result of his chemotherapy but the doctors say that is a temporary thing."

When Jake received his Little Star award he took it to school and showed it to everyone in assembly. His twin sister Charlotte and brother Jamie, eight, also received certificates in recognition of the support they have given to Jake.

Jane Redman, Cancer Research UK West Midlands spokesperson, said: "Jake is a true Little Star and richly deserves this award. It is lovely to see him doing so well."

To nominate a child for a Little Star award visit www.cruck.org/littlestar



Brave six-year-old Jake with his mother Rachel, and top, from left, his twin sister Charlotte, Jane Redman from Cancer Research and his brother, Jamie, aged 8

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Tributes to a prolific goalscorer

A FOOTBALLER who notched up hundreds of goals during a glittering amateur career on the pitch has died at the age of 39.

Former Tipton Town striker Brendan Pugh had a trial at current Championship club Watford but did not want to leave the area where he made his name as a prolific goal-scorer with blistering pace.

He died at home December 3 after a long illness. His wife Nicola, 36, led tributes poured in from the footballing fraternity including from the president of his former club Tipton Town.

Happy

Father-of-two Mr Pugh, who lived with his family in Hope Road, Tipton, started as a youth at Halesowen Town and during his playing career had been at Willenhall, Stourbridge, Oldbury, Darlaston, Trivale, Toll End and Tipton Town.

Nicola said: "Everybody admired him because of how good he was, nobody ever knocked him. The only thing people would have said was he should have pushed harder and gone further, but he was happy where he was."

"He didn't want to travel, he liked his comfort zone. We were once offered a relocation to Canada through his work but he said he wasn't ready to give up football and he would miss his mum and dad."

West Bromwich Albion season ticket holder Mr Pugh, who ran the Rising Sun pub in Tipton for eight years as well as being an electrician, would follow the Baggies across the country with two boys Danny, 17, and Reece, aged 13.

At his funeral last week he was to be carried in a blue and white striped coffin with the club's crest on.

John Cross, president and chairman at Tipton Town, where Mr Pugh remains one of their highest-ever scorers with more than 120 goals, said: "He was a brilliant footballer and very outgoing. He was a very quick player, which is why he scored so many goals."

Armed robber

A RAIDER armed with a gun and knife demanded cash in a raid on a bookmakers in the Black Country. The raid happened at William Hill in Queen's Road, Smethwick, on Saturday at 8.20pm. No shots were fired and the robber fled empty-handed.

Last Thursday robbers struck at Co-op stores in Regent Road, Trivale, and Penn Road, Wolverhampton.

Pet ban for couple who left dog to suffer

"I WAS poorly" - that was an alcoholic's response to an RSPCA inspector who found his dog suffering from severe mange.

Mark Taylor, 37, and his wife Billy, 39, have been banned from keeping animals for life after failing to provide veterinary care for their dog Tammy.

They both also received 10-week prison sentences, suspended for 12 months, and were placed under supervision for a year.

Mark Taylor was put on a six-month alcohol treatment plan while Billy Taylor was placed on a 21-day activity requirement. Both were ordered to pay £500 court costs.

The pair pleaded guilty to causing unnecessary suffering to a protected animal.

Sandwell Magistrates Court on Friday heard that the couple from Lye had taken the Staffordshire bull terrier to the PDSA with demodectic mange last October.

They took the dog to two further appointments in December and January but did not return despite being asked to by the vets.

In April RSPCA inspectors visited their home in Connops Way and found the dog under a blanket with severe mange.

Mrs Gaynor Sutton, prosecuting for the RSPCA, told the hearing the dog was taken to be examined by an independent vet. She said: "The vet described it as one of the worst cases they have ever seen. The dog was systematically ill and in pain as a result

of infection. It would have been obvious to any responsible owner that the dog was in pain and desperately required treatment."

Appointments

In interview, Mark Taylor said he was too poorly to take the dog to appointments.

Mrs Sutton said: "What is clear is that the condition has been ongoing from October the previous year. Some treatment has been given by PDSA but defendants failed to keep appointments and get medication."

"There was a period of prolonged neglect, with some attempts to get the dog treated, but it was wholly inadequate."

Mrs Dawn Foxall, defending the couple,

said both are unemployed and claiming benefits and Mark Taylor is an alcoholic.

The dog was purchased for Billy Taylor by Mark Taylor as an engagement present in June 2011.

Mrs Foxall said: "It has to be accepted that they took some steps to try and address the condition, they didn't go far enough. They missed appointments. The condition cleared up but they didn't appreciate that this was something which would return with vengeance."

The two-year-old dog has since recovered and is to be re-homed.

Mrs Foxall added: "They are both genuinely remorseful."

Crisis as horses being tied up and left to die

HORSES are lying dead and still tethered to their posts with authorities struggling to cope, says a Black Country MP.

The RSPCA and councils are being swamped with calls over the problem but suspect there could be even more cases which are not being reported through fears of reprisals from aggressive owners.

The issue has been raised in Parliament amid mounting concern that cash-strapped councils are being inundated with calls and unable to deal with tethered horses.

One animal welfare officer in the Black Country has revealed that as many as three calls can be made about wild horses in a single morning.

Health

Seven horses were found by the RSPCA last week - five of them near Fens Pool in Brierley Hill, the other two in Wolverhampton.

Four of the horses found in Brierley Hill had to be put down because they were in such poor health.

The Government says Parliament is currently working on a new law that will require owners of 'fly-grazed' horses to remove or sell them or be charged with a criminal offence.

The pledge was made after Pat McFadden, MP for Wolverhampton South East said the problem is a common one across the Black Country.

Dudley Council alone spent more than £150,000 over two years to round up stray horses.

Mr McFadden said existing legislation to tackle the problem was not working and that the government

needed to give more support to councils.

He said: "In many parts of the Black Country, specifically around the Bilston and Bradley areas of my constituency, it is common to see horses grazing on abandoned former industrial land."

Forgotten, unwanted or too injured to be of any use, horses cost more to humanely put to sleep than they would make by being sold.

It leaves the RSPCA and animal welfare officers collecting them from parts of the Black Country and, in many cases, having to immediately put them out of their misery.

There are calls from council leaders and an MP for urgent action to deal with 'fly-grazing' amid reports that animals have been found in appalling conditions - in some cases already dead and still tethered to ropes.

Fens Pool Nature Reserve in Pensnett, Dudley, is a particular problem spot.

RSPCA inspector Jackie Hickman said four of the horses found in Brierley Hill were in such poor health they had to be immediately put to sleep.

Inspector Hickman said: "It can cost more to deal with these animals than the owners would get for selling them."



RSPCA inspector Jackie Hickman with Skippy, one of the horses rescued from a bleak fate in the Black Country

"Fens Pool and areas like it are becoming a dumping ground for these poor horses. "Equine shelters are at the point where they are overwhelmed."

Cost

"I am very saddened by what's happening. We work with authorities like Dudley Council but it is an extremely difficult situation to stay on top of."

It has cost taxpayers in Dudley borough £150,000 since 2011 to remove the abandoned horses and either

rehome them or put them to sleep if they are too injured.

Teachers at The Wordsley School have previously had to chase off strays and been forced to put up fencing to keep animals at bay.

Three years ago horses were found grazing on playing fields at Brook Primary School, Wordsley.

Roaming horses have caused havoc. In June this year, three animals were spotted wandering along Pensnett High Street,

forcing drivers to slow down near Russells Hall Hospital.

Dudley councillor Tracy Wood said 300 stray horses were taken away in the borough over two years.

She said: "The police have legal powers to remove horses from the highway. Unfortunately these same police powers do not apply on public open space or private land such as Fens Pool nature reserve."

"As this land is not designated by the council as grazing land for horses, irresponsible horse owners who

allow their animals to roam free are doing so illegally."

"We have a long-standing, tried and tested arrangement with a private enforcement agency which posts warning notices stating that stray and illegally grazing horses may be impounded in targeted actions at appropriate times."

Intimidation from owners sometimes prevents people removing the horses, according to Mr McFadden, who raised the matter in Parliament.

NEWS in brief

MP urges use of heating helpline

DUDLEY North MP Ian Austin has called on residents to take advantage of energy schemes to help heat their homes.

New research from Home Heat Helpline shows that 118,000 households in the Black Country are eligible for assistance from their energy supplier with heating their homes.

In total 26 per cent of homes in the Black Country are entitled to relief from energy companies. Households that qualify include low income pensioners, disadvantaged families with children or those with a disability.

Mr Austin MP said: "Annual energy bills have gone up by £300 a year since 2010. The best way for people in the Black Country to prepare right now is to call the Home Heat Helpline on 0800 33 66 99 to see if they're eligible for assistance."

UKIP announce council candidate

WORDSLEY born and raised businessman Paul Brothwood, aged 30, has been announced as the UKIP candidate for Wordsley in next May's Dudley Council elections.

Chairman of Dudley and Halesowen UKIP, Bill Etheridge said: "Paul is one of the exciting new generation of UKIP candidates that we expect to take the council elections by storm in May."

UKIP will contest every Dudley Council seat.

Family carols in town arts centre

CHRISTMAS Together in Netherton will be celebrated at Netherton Arts Centre on Saturday, and admission is free.

The event from 7pm will feature community carols for the family. Local schoolchildren will be performing. Refreshments will be available.

The musical event is being organised by Churches Together In Netherton.

Festive theme at church's concert

FESTIVE music and poems will feature at a Christmas coffee concert at Halesowen Parish Church on Saturday at 10.15am. There will be vocal and instrumental music, poems and readings given by members and friends of the church. The concert is free to attend but there will be a collection for a nominated charity.

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or Steve Clift on 01384 353732

NEWS

THE BEST
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RHODES

ON THE surface, glamour, glitz and sweet perfection. Underneath, yuk. From what we have heard in court, the Saatchi/Nigella marriage could have come straight out of Beautiful South's hit, Don't Marry Her. The song has a wonderful (and suitably culinary) line describing the sad state of affairs "when your socks smell of angels, but your life smells of Brie."

□□□□□□□□

ANYONE else puzzled at the Government's eagerness to get people with dementia diagnosed as quickly as possible? The latest weapon in the campaign is a dementia map showing which parts of Britain are good, having the highest numbers of patients diagnosed by doctors, and which areas are bad for identifying fewer sufferers. Call me awkward but if I felt the mist descending in my head, I'd be inclined to move to one of the bad areas pretty damn quick. Most types of dementia cannot be cured and having the D-word stamped on your medical records can ruin your life on many levels, from losing your driving licence to being refused travel insurance. I bet millions of folk see no point in a diagnosis until there is some hope of a cure. Just put me down as "a bit forgetful," thanks.

□□□□□□□□

BY CHANCE, in the week that the Government urged us to take Alzheimer's more seriously, my local sweetshop started selling Senior Moment Memory-Loss Mints.

□□□□□□□□

AIR Vice-Marshals Elaine West, Britain's most senior female officer, says that one day a woman may head the armed forces. I seem to recall a woman did exactly that, a while ago. Twin-set, pearls, handbag? Come to think of it, for a few years Britain's armed forces were commanded by two women. The one with the handbag and the one with the crown.

□□□□□□□□

AS an avid online customer, I love the idea of remote-controlled drones delivering Amazon items to our back garden. For a start, it will save wear-and-tear on our pot-holed old farm track. And yet drones, as used to deadly effect in Afghanistan and Pakistan, are not foolproof. If they can deliver 500 lbs of high explosive to the wrong address, they can presumably send a boxful of birthday presents to the wrong person. There is also the tiny problem that our back garden, like so many, is equipped with a steel-reinforced drone-wrecking device. Or washing line, as we call it.

□□□□□□□□

ONE of the saddest news reports of the past few days was the discovery of a cannabis farm in the old Drakelow Tunnels near Kidderminster. It was the latest indignity heaped on a place which is a national treasure deserving of protected status. The tunnels were built in the Second World War as a factory producing aircraft engines in bomb-proof workshops deep in the solid rock. In the Cold War, the tunnels became "The Hole," the regional-government bunker from which, if the worst happened, the Midlands would be fed, watered, healed and governed. I spent a week-long exercise down there in the early 1980s when it was throbbing with life as Home Office scientists, weathermen, military officers, cops and fire chiefs planned for nuclear war. Other bunkers have been saved but Drakelow lies neglected, vandalised and latterly used for growing hash. In its own way it is as important to our island story as the caverns below Dover Castle or Churchill's war bunker. It deserves better than this.

□□□□□□□□

IN AN idle moment I voted in an online poll asking whether people who throw flares at football matches should face harsher punishment. I expected to see an overwhelming Yes vote. But at the time I cast my vote, more than a quarter of respondents had voted against tougher sanctions. This suggests thousands of fans are fairly relaxed about blazing objects being lobbed over their heads. And then you do the sums and realise that Bradford was 28 years ago. No-one under 40 really remembers what happens when a football stadium catches fire. Let us hope they never have a reminder.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Patient left hospital in handcuffs

SHE arrived at hospital in an ambulance but Nicola Lucas left in handcuffs after attacking a security guard in a 'disgraceful' drink-fuelled chain of events.

After she got to Russells Hall Hospital in Dudley, Nicola Lucas quickly left the hospital site after she had an argument with a man and then boarded a nearby bus. But her

behaviour meant she had to be ejected from the bus by hospital security guard Chad Baxter.

Spitting

Prosecutor Mrs Dawn Cartwright said as Lucas was taken downstairs in the bus, she kicked Mr Baxter before spitting over his face while she was being restrained.

She said 'hope you die in your sleep' as she was put on the floor.

At Dudley Magistrates' Court, she pleaded guilty to causing a disturbance at the hospital on October 12 and also to assaulting Mr Baxter.

Lucas, aged 34, of Blackhorse Lane, Brierley Hill, was spared an immediate jail sentence but was given an eight-week prison term

suspended for 12 months. She must also attend alcohol treatment sessions.

Mr Roy McVeigh, defending Lucas, told the court: "She appears to be genuinely remorseful and fears the outcome of today."

Lucas is also facing a bill for over £250 after being told to pay £100 compensation and £165 in costs.

Investing in hi-tech machine pays off

A COMPANY in Kingswinford is reporting increased business after making a six-figure investment in new technology.

Arford Steel Profiles strengthened its portfolio by spending £300,000 on a hi-tech plasma cutting machine in October.

The equipment is now up and running after a complex installation process at the company's Stallings Lane site and owner Diane Kimberley said there has already been strong interest from customers.

Orders

"The plasma machine gives us a massive boost because it means we can complete orders quicker and more precisely than ever before," she said.

"It has only been running for a week and we've already won business that we wouldn't have if we had continued with only our flame cutting equipment."

"Speed, precision and quality are the big watchwords in this industry these days and bringing in plasma technology means we are in a better position to meet all of our customers' requirements."

Arford Steel Profiles, which has been going for more than 20 years, was taken over in 2006 by Miss Kimberley, the company's former commercial director, who has been in the steel industry all of her working life.

The company has enjoyed growth since then and now has a consistent turnover of around £2.5 million.

Rubbish will become fuel

THOUSANDS of tons of rubbish that were once destined for landfill will now be turned into fuel for power stations at a waste plant in Tipton.

Plans to convert the Biffa Waste Facility in Chimney Road into a site that creates refuse derived fuels (RDF) have been approved by Sandwell Council.

Councillors at a planning meeting voted unanimously to see the site converted to allow it to turn waste once destined for landfill into RDF.

More than 60,000 tons of the processed waste will go to power stations around the world.

Frozen food future for market building

A FORMER market will be transformed into a frozen food supermarket in a move hoped to boost trade in a Black Country High Street.

Concord Market in Brierley Hill's High Street, which closed five months ago, will be reopened as a Farm Foods store in January.

Market owner Shane Birch-Bastock announced the awarding of the 20-year lease to the Scottish-based firm, which has more than 300 stores across the country.

Free

He also said more than 70 parking spaces at the rear of the market will remain free to use for up to two hours.

The Concord Market was at the 9,000 sq ft indoor site for more than 40 years until closure in July.

Mr Birch-Bastock, who is managing director of owners Pentax Developments, said he also had interest for the site from a car sales firm but preferred the supermarket to support town regeneration.

He said: "I wanted to make sure the new use of the market would benefit the town in the long-term and get people walking down that end of the street and adding footfall for other businesses."

"It is sad to see the market go but it was losing money for years. I couldn't do it any longer. It needed something new to come in and give the place a new look and purpose."

Man had indecent images

A MAN found with indecent images of children on his computers has been handed a three-year community order.

Wolverhampton Crown Court heard police raided the family home of Stephen Martin, aged 44, in Bromley Lane, Pensnett, on September 28. Martin, now of Kingsley Road, Kingswinford, was given a three-year community order with supervision and must undertake a sex offender treatment programme. He was ordered to sign the sex offenders' register and to pay £240 costs after admitting 10 offences of possession of indecent images of children, and three of having extreme pornographic images.

Bucketloads of cash for charity



Charity fundraising manager Karen Phillips with Chartway's John Clark and wife Karen, from Bridgnorth, who have chosen the charity for their company to support

STAFF at a manufacturing firm have pledged to dig deep to support a hospital charity with their latest appeal.

Chartway, based at Harts Hill, Brierley Hill, will be donating £1,000 for patients helped by the Dudley Group NHS Charity.

The charity works with patients at Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital and also those out in the community. Charity volunteers have launched their annual appeal -

this year called 'Cancer - caring for the patient and their family'.

Charity fundraising manager Karen Phillips said: "It is vital to the charity that we provide as much added comfort for our cancer patients as possible." Chartway managing director John Clark added: "When my wife and I have had cause to visit hospitals in the past we realised what a difference charitable funds can make to the patients."

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Funding is available to back social care ideas

A £200,000 funding pot has been launched for community-minded businesses who believe they can make a difference to adult social care and support services in Dudley borough.

Dudley Council has launched round two of the Dudley Innovation Fund (DIF) to help people get ideas off the ground.

The first phase was launched at the end of 2012 when the council announced it was making £200,000 available for small enterprises, community groups and voluntary organisations. Money was awarded to several small enterprises including Dudley Centre for Inclusive Living, MDH Support and Bread2Share.

Gaps

Since then the council has worked to identify where gaps exist in adult social care and services. Applicants for round two will be asked to consider how they can address these.

There will be three strands to the fund. The first element is Kick Start, which offers grants of £500 to £2,000 to develop or test an idea. The second element is progression funding which offers grants of up to £10,000 to implement an idea and the final new element for 2014 is the innovation bursary.

People will be able to get advice at a surgery taking place on Saturday in Nether-ton. Places need to be booked on 01384 815875.

Call to knock down Arthur

A FORMER mayor hopes an empty landmark pub in Dudley is demolished because it is becoming an eyesore.

The King Arthur pub on the corner of the Birmingham Road and Priory Road has been closed for more than two years and this autumn it was refused the protection of listed status by English Heritage because of fire damage.

Councillor Ken Finch said he now hoped that decision would pave the way for the site to be redeveloped.

He said: "We're waiting on the developer to put forward a planning application to redevelop the pub. The sooner the better."

Dudley Council made an order earlier this year that any work to demolish the pub would need a full planning application.

Building society opens new HQ at The Waterfront



Mayor of Dudley Councillor Alan Finch at the HQ's opening with The Dudley's chief executive Jeremy Wood

THE next stage of the Dudley Building Society's modernisation has been taken with the move of its head office to a new home in Brierley Hill.

The Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Alan Finch, cut the ribbon at the official opening of the society's new offices at Harbour Buildings at The Waterfront, Brierley Hill.

The opening of the offices at the former headquarters of Hampson Industries has created 10 new jobs.

There are 55 staff now based at the 155-year-old society's new head offices

which have nearly 6,000 sq ft of space. As well as opening the new two-storey offices, the society is in the midst of a modernisation programme for its six branches in the Black Country and south Staffordshire.

Assets

The main Dudley branch remains at the society's former head office site in Stone Street, Dudley.

The society, which has 33,000 members and assets of £319 million, is also introducing a new information technology system across its business.

The society's chief executive, Jeremy Wood, who joined the Dudley from One Savings Bank last year, said: "We have plans to grow the society and place it very much at the heart of the community in the Black Country."

The society also marked the opening of the new offices with a celebration dinner at Himley Hall, when special guests were entertained by veteran Black Country comedian Aynuk and up-and-coming blues performer Blues Boy Dan Owen, who is to support rock legends Fleetwood Mac on tour next year.

Temporary jobs at store cut sooner than expected

DOZENS of workers hired by a supermarket for its opening have had their contracts cut short as bosses say they are no longer needed.

Extra staff were taken on by Tesco ahead of the opening of the company's huge Extra store at the Crown Centre in Stourbridge at the end of October.

A total of 47 people were brought in to assist the 352 permanently contracted employees.

Some had their temporary contracts set up to run until December 31.

But bosses decided to end all temporary contracts at the store and launched a consultation with affected staff members.

A spokesman said: "Whenever we open a new store it is normal that we take on a number of temporary colleagues to support the permanent team members. Unfortunately we are not able to extend the temporary contracts."

"Everyone on a temporary contract has been made aware of other opportunities in the business and we will be supporting them should they wish to pursue these."

A worker who joined the store on a permanent contract in October, but did not wish to be named, said

Report by Alex Ross

morale had dropped following the news some staff would be leaving.

He said: "After hearing about everyone, I thought, 'rubbish, am I going to be losing my job too?' It isn't great with some of the workers coming in and then leaving soon after - some are obviously unhappy."

Out of the 352 permanent staff employed, none had been impacted by the decision, the Tesco spokesman said.

This included the 98 people taken on as part of a Regeneration Partnership programme to help those long-term unemployed get back into work, while 45 positions were given to young people.

The store received 5,000 applications for the 350 jobs created. The Tesco Extra store is 94,500 sq ft and is the anchor store at the new Crown Centre.

Crane firm sold

THE future of a crane services business and its workforce in Amblecote has been secured following a takeover by a major French group.

Rob Lewis, managing director at Crane Services, had decided he wanted to retire after reaching the age of 61, and has sold the business to REEL, a £400m-a-year nuclear lifting specialist with operations around the world.

The price tag on the takeover deal is not being revealed but a Crane Services spokeswoman said it would mean 'job security for all'.

The company currently employs 13 people at its Platts Road head office and workshop, with another dozen employed at REEL's UK site near Reading.

Holly's day of delight at school



Helping Holly - Receiving the cheque is, front from left, Julie Perks, and Holly Foley, aged six, with class teacher Kelly Williams, and her classmates at Ashwood Park Primary School, in Bells Lane, Wordsley

FUNDRAISERS have collected more than £2,000 to help a Stourbridge family buy a specially adapted bike for a girl growing up with a disability that makes it difficult for her to get around.

Holly Foley suffers from a condition called sacral agenesis which causes a partition of the spine and leaves her struggling with mobility.

The six-year-old mainly uses a wheelchair at the moment and has begun walking with the aid of a frame for short distances.

When her classmates and teachers Ashwood Park Primary School, in Wordsley, heard of her difficulties they struck upon a fundraising plan to help. Her fellow pupils have been selling

raffle tickets to help pay for the hand-operated bike, which costs £698.

When other businesses heard about the cause, they also stepped into help, including £377 from online cake mould retailer Mamma & Mia Moulds.

Holly's mother Julie Perks, 45, said: "We have been overwhelmed by everyone's generosity."

NEWS in brief

Craft group has a town centre shop

A SOCIAL enterprise, which helps adults recovering from mental illness, has moved to a new town centre shop and workshop at King Street in Dudley.

Local law firm Higgs & Sons Solicitors, assisted Woodside Crafts with its move. Previously based at the Woodside Day Centre, it involves people in making wooden items and garden furniture for sale.

Richard Griffiths, an associate solicitor in Brierley Hill-based Higgs' corporate department, has been acting as a mentor to the group since February as part of the law firm's commitment to supporting social enterprises.

Chief's praise for creative agency

A MARKETING and design agency received a visit from a regeneration chief as part of Small Business Saturday.

Councillor Judy Foster, cabinet member for regeneration at Dudley Council, went to see Nutcracker Designer in Martins Hall Street, Dudley. The agency has been going for 12 years and employs nine people.

Councillor Foster said: "It is really inspiring to see a creative design agency here in Dudley working with new media for local and national clients."

Dementia group earns NHS praise

A DEMENTIA support service used by more than 1,000 people has been highly commended by the NHS.

Dudley Council's dementia gateway service received the praise from the national NHS Dementia Partnership Challenge for its innovation. It provides help to 1,300 people and aims to help people stay at home for longer.

Santa's sleigh is now on the way

THE Rotary Club of Kinver will bring Santa on his evening sleigh ride to Dunsley tonight, Kinver High Street on Saturday, Bridgnorth Road area of Wollaston on Monday, Stourton on Tuesday, Vicarage Road area of Wollaston on Wednesday, and Wall Heath on December 19

Old canal bridge is made stronger

A 170-year-old bridge that has undergone major safety work has been reopened. Major strengthening work has been carried out on Brades Hall Canal Bridge in Dudley Road East, Oldbury.

CHRONICLE



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NEWS FEATURE

IN MY VIEW

WITH
MARK
ANDREWS

FORMER Home Secretary Jack Straw says 'there is never a good time to increase MPs' pay'. Too right there's not. So let's make sure it never happens.

ON a more serious note, the fact that two-thirds of MPs think that they are underpaid says much about the make-up of the House of Commons today.

Not so long ago, few people saw politics as a career. It was a hobby, an outside interest, something that people did to give something back to the community towards the end of their careers.

Then along came Tony Blair, who said that being an MP was a full-time job, and it was wrong that they had outside interests.

It might have sounded a good idea at the time, but we now have a generation of politicians who go straight from the students' union disco to the corridors of power, and think because they work full-time they are entitled to the same salary as a GP.

There was a lot to be said for the days of modestly paid, part-time MPs with a wealth of life experience.

AND now for something completely different. Just when you thought you had seen it all, up pops John Wood who thinks he has spotted a gap in the market for a dating agency targeted purely at Monty Python fans.

Mr Wood, who is 53, has been looking for love ever since his wife left him over his obsession with the comedy series.

"Python is such an important and central part of my life which has even shaped the way I see the world. I can't imagine it being possible to be in a relationship with someone who doesn't get Python," he explained.

"I am hoping that, out there somewhere, is a gorgeous 30-something, Python-quoting single lady."

Not asking for much, is he? Talk about life imitating art.

Maybe he will take the lead of Python's Simon, Zinc-Trumphet-Harris, and find himself in a fulfilling relationship with 'a very attractive table lamp', and no doubt the wedding will be spectacular.

Silly walks up the aisle, walking out to the Lumberjack song, and Spam sandwiches at the reception. What more could a girl ask for?

HAVE you noticed it's been getting a bit nippy lately? Could be something to do with the extreme temperatures that have been sweeping the South Pole.

New data reveals that the coldest ever temperature recorded on earth came in August 2010, when it plunged to -135.8 deg F (-94.7C). Then on July, 31, this year, it came close again, dropping to -135.3 deg F (-92.9C).

Clearly, something needs to be done about global warming.



Jane with Paul McCartney at the Alfie premiere, 1966



Cutting the ribbon at 500th store with boss Jim McCarthy



The 60s starlet with her trademark redhead locks

What will Jane bring to Poundland table?

With the opening of Poundland's 500th store, star baker **JANE ASHER** hopes to change perceptions about the discount retailer

SHE WAS once the envy of practically every teenage girl in the Western world when she was the girlfriend of former Beatle Paul McCartney.

Jane Asher, actress, author, baker and for many, an icon of the swinging 60s, was a permanent fixture on the arm of the celebrated music legend, and was expected to be Mrs McCartney, having been his muse for five years.

But away from the heady days of psychedelia and yellow submarines, Jane now finds herself out of Pepperland and very much at the forefront of Poundland, having cut the ribbon on Britain's 500th discount store in Birmingham.

Since hanging up her acting boots, Jane has gone on to become renowned as a baking entrepreneur, with a bakeware collection due to be launched throughout the Willenhall-based company's stores up and down the country, early in the new year.

It is the firm's first foray into celebrity collaboration, but comes on the back of the ever-increasing popularity of home baking in the UK, which now sees an incredible one in seven Brits baking more than twice a week.

Five years ago, the idea that such a standard bearer for middle-class domesticity would have opened a branch of Poundland would have been laughed at.

Does her endorsement finally mark a watershed moment for the Black Country-based retailer, where nothing costs more than £1? She certainly believes so. The actress, who made her name alongside Michael Caine in Alfie, says she has long been a Poundland shopper. "I know Poundland, I shop



Baking belle Jane Asher whose appeal may now go beyond the middle classes

there, like most people, towards Christmas, where I will pick up bits and pieces.

"I hate that awful expression 'yummy mummies', but my step-daughter who has two children, regularly shops at Poundland.

"The notion that it's just popular with people who have no money, or the downtrodden, is simply not true. Every body needs to be sensible with their

money, and that it is true across the social classes."

Poundland chief executive Jim McCarthy points out that 22 per cent of the chain's shoppers come from the higher income groups, known as AB in marketing terms, and says the tough economic climate of the last five years has played a crucial role in bringing the retailer into the mainstream.

The latest expansion programme will see a total of 21 new Poundland stores open over a five-week period, and Mr McCarthy says the company has identified 1,000 more sites with the potential of supporting another Poundland.

The chain was founded in 1990, when former Bilston market traders Keith and Steve Smith opened a pilot store in Burton-upon-Trent. At the time, many landlords were reluctant to grant them a lease, fearing they would undercut all the neighbouring stores.

But after a tentative start, the company has grown into a high street staple, more than doubling the number of stores over the last three years, and employing more than 12,000 people - including several hundred at Poundland's head offices and distribution site in Willenhall and its second warehouse site in nearby Bilston.

Agreeing

"We have had five years of recession, and a consequence of that is that people have been looking to make their money go further," says Mr McCarthy.

But given that all the indicators suggest the economy is finally showing signs of life, is there not a risk that people will begin turning away from Poundland, just when all its new stores are coming on-stream? "I don't think so, I think the changes that we have seen will prove sticky. People have become used to saving money, and they are proud that they are saving money."

Even so, Jane does say that lending her name to the new Poundland baking range was not something she did lightly.

She says she was initially approached by a company she works with, which is also a supplier to Poundland, and says she thought long and hard before agreeing to anything.

"I'm very lucky in that I have a name that people trust, and I never stick my name on something unless I either use it regularly, or have designed it myself," she says. "But when I looked into it, I thought it was a really good idea. I feel it's a way of helping people to bake who haven't done so in the past."

THROUGH THE YEARS

1983...

THE leader of Wolverhampton Council demanded urgent talks with Wolves owners, saying the club was turning the town into a laughing stock. Councillor John Bird, a Wolves season ticket holder, laid into the club's owners Allied Properties for failing to invest in the team.

STORES throughout the West Midlands were racing against time to ensure there would be no festive disappointment as the area went computer crazy. Number one on most children's Christmas lists was the Sinclair Spectrum 48K, which sold for £129.95.

TONY Morley, who a year earlier had laid on Peter Withe's winning goal in Aston Villa's European Cup triumph, was sold to arch rivals West Bromwich Albion.

1993...

A PUB was refusing to accept £50 notes for fear of fraud. The Anchor Inn, at Coven, near Wolverhampton, made the controversial ruling after accepting £50 notes which had turned out to be fake.

ROY Castle was in good form as he prepared to take to the stage at Birmingham's Alexandra Theatre, despite facing a new battle against lung cancer. The 61-year-old said 'the show must go on' ahead of the opening night of Pickwick at the theatre, just three weeks after starting a new course of chemotherapy.

IT WAS an emotional moment for Wolves fans as Hungarian giants Honved returned to Molineux in a game to mark the completion of a £15 million redevelopment of the stadium. Wolves had famously played Honved in pioneering European floodlit clashes during the 1950s.

2003...

CONFUSION reigned about the opening of Britain's first toll motorway. Staffordshire Fire Service and the Road Hauliers' Association both said they believed the M6 Toll route would be opening on December 8, but within minutes of the announcement the company which was to operate the road distanced itself from the announcement.

"We have not been given a confirmed opening date," said Andrew Roache, of Midland Expressway. A spokesman for the Central Motorway Police Group said he expected it to be open on December 8 or 9.

DARLSTON'S Mark Rhodes made the final three in the Pop Idol television talent show - singing a Black Country Christmas classic. And his triumph was music to the ears of the man who wrote Slade's Merry Xmas Everybody, Jimmy Lea.

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LETTERS

Saga of the garden waste bin

WHEN green bins were introduced by Dudley Council we declined because at the time my husband made regular trips to the tip. Due to a change of circumstances we now require one, so in July I rang Dudley Council. They were out of stock but would be available in two weeks and to ring again then.

Could I not go on a waiting list I asked as it appeared from the conversation there were a number of people waiting for one. I was told they did not have a facility for that.

Invisible zebra is making me cross

I SIT outside my children's school every morning. I am amazed at the amount of drivers who don't know what a zebra crossing is. I watch as countless drivers ignore the pedestrians patiently waiting to cross.

Has the driving test really changed that much that they don't teach what a zebra crossing is anymore?

Maybe drivers think that it is an animal escaped from the local zoo and is just having a lie down in the road so drivers can drive over it at high speed whilst ignoring all other moving objects.

Or maybe the crossing outside the school is invisible and I have super human powers and am one of the few lucky humans who can see it.

Please people slow down outside schools and take time to look twice at the pavement when approaching a pedestrian crossing. One day it might be too late.

M Rankin
Brierley Hill

Five phone calls later, I was told it would be delivered in the next couple of weeks. Eight weeks later I emailed the council to see if I could get any joy with that method. I got an email back saying they were in stock but they would not be delivering until next March as we would not need it until then.

Let me inform them that we do need it, the problem is that someone made the idiotic decision not to empty them after October.

Lawns still have to be cut later than

ever, spent bedding plants, frost taken shrubs to be cut down, not to mention mountains of leaves. The list goes on, even a small garden like ours could fill a bin until at least December.

When I replied to the email to ask if this meant I was now on a waiting list I was told yes but if it didn't arrive to ring again in March! I fully expect to have to start the whole process again next year.

J James
Dock Road
Wordsley

LETTERS to the Editor

POST

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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number of the writer. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

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Deliver a fair share of your tax

TO Amazon Bosses. The best Christmas gift you could deliver would be to pay all the unpaid tax that you continue to dodge in the UK. That way there would be no need to sack so many public sector workers and cut so many services.

You could also recognise trade unions to ensure your staff (by the way they are human beings not elves) are treated with dignity, respect and rewarded with decent wages and working conditions. May the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future haunt your consciences until you deliver the above gifts.

Tony Barnsley
Cherry Tree Lane
Halesowen

Thanks for help

I WOULD like to thank the firemen of Old Hill station who helped the lady living in the sheltered flats nearby. It has been a pleasure having you in our community and we will miss you when you move.

Name and address
supplied

Shock at new home for royal 'freeloaders' in time of bedroom tax

ON A recent trip to the USA I saw in one of the stores there a copy of People magazine which was glorifying in the luxury of the new home of Prince William and his bride Kate Middleton here in the UK.

One of the things they got excited about was that the country mansion they are moving into contains ten, count them, ten bedrooms.

Of course they are not familiar with the term bedroom tax in the USA, and not having to pay for the royal family, they can afford to ignore the irony of this situation.

Meanwhile, hundreds – possibly thousands – of working class people here are being penalised for having a spare room in their modest properties whilst still being expected to fund the royal freeloaders to the tune of millions of pounds.

Until any government addresses this issue, they will not get my support or vote because I think spending money on the so-called royal family is the most scandalous waste of money and has done more than anything to bring the country to its knees.

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MEMORY LANE



Billy Wright leads England out for the match against Hungary in 1953, at Wembley



Wright and Ferenc Puskas hand over mementoes before England went on to win 6-3



£10,000 delight – football historian Tony Matthews



The programme from the historic 1953 match which has been signed by all the players and officials

Historic match memento is a £10k bonus for Tony

IT IS the stuff of dreams for any collector – an old football programme signed by the England team and now valued at £10,000.

Football author and historian Tony Matthews hit the jackpot more than 30 years ago when his wife Margaret bought a job lot of old programmes from someone who just wanted to clear out his garage.

It turned out that the match programme for a 1953 clash between England and Hungary was worth many times the rest of the batch combined.

Hungary, then the world's number one ranked international side and on an unbeaten run stretching 24 games, won 6-3 in front of a Wembley crowd of 105,000. Former West Bromwich Albion historian Mr Matthews, who worked for the club for 30 years, remembers little of the time that Margaret paid for the programmes, other than that there were 4,000 of them in a garage in Evesham and it took three trips to get them all.

by Daniel Wainwright

The couple used to live in Kinner and Wall Heath but have since moved to Spain.

All of the Hungarian side had signed the programme as had most of the England team.

Mr Matthews made arrangements to visit the others whose names were missing whenever West Brom had an away match in their area.

Most of the players, apart from Jackie Sewell, Sir Tom Finney and Jeno Buzansky have since died.

Mr Matthews, aged 70, said: "At the time I was collecting programmes, trying to reach the milestone of one million. I used to advertise locally asking for any football programmes. The most I bought in one go was 40,000."

As a collector Mr Matthews got to know the values of various 'big match' programmes, particularly the ones with autographs. He said: "Regarding the England-Hungary production, I had various valuations done, by serious col-

lectors up and down the UK, and the initial price given was £4,000. Later it was valued at £5,000 when it was 50 years old in 2003. One person in north Wales wanted to buy it there and then."

"I went on to the Antiques Roadshow in 2008 and this time it was valued, there and there, at around the £6,000 mark, but since then more players have sadly died and therefore the price has increased and now it is insured for £10,000."

Mr Matthews, who lives in the Cabrera mountains in Spain, said he intends to sell the programme once his wife agrees.

The programme is never sent anywhere and is kept under lock and key.

Last year Mr Matthews learned that he was the world's biggest-selling author of football books with 123 published. His books include West Bromwich Albion: The Complete Record and England Who's Who: 140 Years Of English International Footballers.

He has two more currently being compiled and three in the pipeline for 2015.



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CLUB NEWS

History of cinema a reel treat

BLACKHEATH MORNING TWG

THE meeting on November 27 was opened by chairman Doreen Armstrong, who welcomed members and visitors together with the day's speaker John Smith.

Monthly reports were given by treasurer Beryl Hartley, outings co-ordinator Brenda Ellesmere and Press officer Iris Harris.

Doreen also gave details of the Christmas meeting and party.

At the end of business Doreen introduced the speaker, whose talk was "The Wonderful World of Cinema".

The group was told that moving pictures "The Movies" were first put into practice by two French brothers way back in February 1896 but it was two years later before they came across the Channel.

When they came to England there were no cinemas as such, the films were usually shown in various local halls. The well-known Pat Collins began to bring movies to the Midlands in 1898. One of the earliest cinemas to be built was The Electric in Birmingham.

John then proceeded to entertain the group with music memorable movies he was sure they would all remember.

Beryl gave the vote of thanks. The meeting was closed at noon and the ladies enjoyed their refreshments before leaving for home.

Whey to go with talk from cheese expert



President Parkash with cheese expert Lavinia Newell

WOLVERHAMPTON SOROPTIMISTS

A WARM welcome was given by President Parkash, who introduced after-dinner speaker Lavinia Newell, a local cheese-maker and national judge of cheese-making competitions.

It was a fascinating and interesting talk on the history and various manufacturing methods of cheese production.

President Parkash reported she had been to the 70th anniversary dinner of the group's 'daughter club' in Bilston and had attended Remembrance Sunday on behalf of the club.

With club members she attended the four-day 79th SIGBE Federation Conference in Gateshead.

November 30 saw close on 60 residents and family members with Friends of Abbeyfield Parkdale meet for a Christmas coffee morning in aid the residents' fund.

Lure of lakes in the frame

AT THE November meeting, the club welcomed David Burton Pye MBE.

He had worked for South Staffordshire District Council but is now retired. His subject was the magic of the mountains and the lure of the lakes.

He had studied the Wainwright guides and has returned again and again to the Lake District to photograph the wonderful scenery

THE BLACK COUNTRY SOCIETY KINGSWINFORD BRANCH

at different times. He said the key to photographs such as wonderful sunsets and dramatic effects with light was simply being in the right place at the right time.

The views are all preserved on slides and were much enjoyed by members. The first meeting of the

new year is on January 15 with speaker Geoff Tristram, artist and author.

Talks take place at the Church Centre behind St Mary's Church, Kingswinford. They are open to members and non-members with a small cost of £1 and £1.50 respectively.

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NEWS

Time for a double take as celebrity lookalikes wed



Martin Jordan as Gordon Ramsay, Ricky Gervais lookalike Tim Oliver, Rose Cook as Debbie Harry, Simon Cowell lookalike Andy Monk and Andy Harmer as David Beckham, all dressed up at the wedding of Rose and Andy

IT WAS the celebrity wedding of the year. Simon Cowell marrying his bride Debbie Harry in front of David Beckham, Gordon Ramsay and Ricky Gervais... well, almost.

Look a little closer and all is not as it seems – this was a love match between a pair of celebrity lookalikes.

Cowell doppelgänger Andy Monk wed Debbie Harry double Rose Cook at The Station Hotel in Dudley. The nuptials caused staff, guests and passers-

by to do a double take and even sent one reaching for their autograph book.

Both regulars on the lookalikes scene, Rose and Andy first met on the set of BBC TV show Doctors when working as extras.

Rose, aged 43, said her new husband is nothing like his lookalike, who is known as TV's Mr Nasty for his straight-talking on Britain's Got Talent and X Factor. "Andy is a really kind-hearted and loving man," she said.

"All our friends can see how much we love each other."

"It was love at first sight to be

honest. He gave me his business card when we met on the set of Doctors and I just couldn't stop thinking about him.

"Then I saw him as a lookalike on Britain's Got Talent and I thought 'oh my God it's him.'"

Rose, who has been performing as a Blondie tribute act for 20 years, said: "When we got chatting I just thought what a lovely man."

The pair wed in front of a crowd of celebrity lookalike friends who they met over the years. Among them was a Taylor Swift lookalike, doubles of footballer David Beckham and comic Ricky Gervais.



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Lord Hodgson with sixth form pupils at Ellowes Hall Sports College, Lower Gornal, where he spoke about his day-to-day role in the House of Lords

Peer mentor gives students insight on work of the Lords

STUDENTS were given an insight behind the scenes of the House of Lords by a visiting dignitary during a school talk.

Lord Hodgson came to speak to sixth form students from Ellowes Hall Sports College, in Lower Gornal, Dudley, last month.

They were taken through life at the Palace of Westminster and in particular through the day-to-day role of a peer in the upper house.

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts CBE, began a Conservative peer in 2000 and takes part in the Lord Speak-

ers Outreach Programme and Peers in Schools scheme. Both were established to help demystify the work of the House of Lords and the role it plays in the legislative process.

Discussion

Members, whose backgrounds include careers as academics, former teachers, scientists, lawyers, former cabinet ministers and civil servants, have visited almost 1,000 schools since it launched in 2007.

Lord Hodgson spent an hour with the teenagers, all part of year 12 at the Stickley Lane school, to also led a dis-

cussion on issues currently being discussed in the Lords. This included the controversial HS2 rail link and assisted suicide. Students were invited to share their own views.

Head of sixth form, Adam White, said Lord Hodgson was an engaging speaker and helped the students understand the role of the House of Lords better.

"Young people are a little disillusioned these days with politics so that is why events like this are good," he said.

"I think the kids learned a lot as he was a very good speaker."

Council firm on Fairtrade

COUNCIL chiefs in Dudley have reinforced their commitment to Fairtrade.

Dudley Council first passed a resolution in July 2007 to support Fairtrade. This helped Stourbridge to become a Fairtrade town in 2010. It has now pledged to increase sales of the products and is striving to achieve Fairtrade status for the borough.

Councillor Pete Lowe, deputy leader, said: "Supporting Fairtrade is a way of expressing our civic pride, supporting our local shops and traders and can make a real difference to the lives of producers around the world."

Views shared on future of services at risk from cuts

MORE than 1,000 residents have taken part in a consultation over pleas to protect vital council-run services in the wake of multi-million pound spending cuts.

Officials on Dudley Council have to find around £32 million extra cuts over the next three years.

They had already drawn up budget proposals to axe around £25 million but were dropped a bombshell when officials from

Whitehall cut Government funding grants back even harder.

The authority became the latest across the Midlands to announce plans to make multi-million worth of savings.

Dudley Council already has to claw back £2.3m from children's services budgets.

They had proposed to shut seven children's centre until they were forced into a u-turn after the wake of public condemnation last month.

Arts

But the axe has fallen on other services including arts funding and there will be increased charges at town centre car parks.

A total of £270,000 will be cut from the maintenance of parks, open spaces and verges and there will also be cutbacks in road and footpath maintenance. It is feared more than 334 jobs could be axed by 2017.

Since its launch last month the Big Question 2014-15 consultation has already attracted nearly 1,400 responses from local people keen to have their views heard.

More than 1,600 people have signed up to the e-bulletins which were launched as part of last year's Big Question consultation on the budget.

Sign up to the e-bulletins by emailing your postcode to community.council@dudley.gov.uk

Dudley Council's finance boss, Councillor Pete Lowe, said he was pleased so many residents had already taken part in the consultation.

He said: "The e-bulletin has transformed our ability to consult with borough residents free of charge and increased the numbers of people we can engage with."

Take part in the Big Question consultation for 2014/15 at

www.dudley.gov.uk or pick up a form from Dudley Council Plus or your local library.

Songs for Samaritans



Musicians Becky Pickin and Andy Miles, who go under the name Grande Valise, show their charity CD to David Chambers, centre, chairman of Brierley Hill Samaritans

FROM drums to the keyboard and guitar to the violin – there is no need for a backing band for one music-loving couple, who have released their first album using only the sounds they have created.

Becky Pickin and Andy Miles, who play 10 instruments between them, have launched the album Minnewater under the name Grande Valise to raise money for the Samaritans branch in Brierley Hill.

The album was inspired by 1960s pop music as well as the couple's visits to Belgium. So far, they have sold around 70 albums, raising more than £500 for charity, with 150 still available from grandevalise.co.uk.

Miss Pickin, 31, from Pensnett, chose the Samaritans after noticing the work they do while working for Dudley Council for Voluntary Service. Mr Miles, aged 30, from Willenhall, works as an assistant at Wolverhampton Library.

Rural roads warning

MOTORISTS have been reminded to take extra care on rural roads because of the dangers of mud on the highway as farmers continue working in the fields.

The Safer Roads Partnership with West Mercia Police are advising people to take extra care where there is mud on the roads and to avoid agricultural vehicles emerging from fields.

Agriculture is one of the area's key industries and the combination of harvesting a wide variety of crops at this time of year and the change in the weather can lead to mud and debris on the road.

Anna Higgins, spokesman for the Safer Roads Partnership, said: "We're advising all motorists to take extra care on rural roads during the late harvest season."

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NEWS



Paula Hodgson with husband Graham, who has died in a car accident on the island of Cyprus

Teacher with passion for history dies in crash

POPULAR teacher and historian Graham Hodgson dreamed of setting up home in Cyprus with his wife Paula.

Since his retirement three years ago, the couple, from Greenbank Gardens, Wordsley, had jetted out for extended stays on the Mediterranean island where they joined volunteers from a church and university working in northern Cyprus. They supported and encouraged international students living there.

But all of the couple's dreams have been shattered by tragedy after 58-year-old Mr Hodgson was killed in a car crash.

He died when the car he was driving was struck from behind.

Investigating

His family paid tribute, describing him as a 'true character' of great integrity who would do anything to help anyone.

Mr Hodgson had been helping his neighbour to pick up

his son from Larnaca airport and bring them both home to Iskele when the accident happened on November 27.

Police are investigating the cause of the collision as his devastated loved ones battle to come to terms with his untimely death.

Youngest daughter Lorna said: "We are all still in shock but we can take comfort in our faith and we are going to celebrate his life as reward for all his hard work on Earth."

Mr Hodgson had moved with his family as a boy from Wallasey, Merseyside, to the Black Country.

His fascination with history and, in particular the First and Second World Wars, led him to pursue a teaching career.

Mr Hodgson met his wife-to-be Paula while she was working at Dudley Leisure Centre. They married on October 23, 1982 at St Andrew's Church, Wall Heath.

As a treat on reaching their 30th anniversary in 2012 they went paragliding over the Cypriot mountains.

Mr Hodgson spent much of his life investing in his local community and bringing the rich heritage of the area to life.

He taught in primary schools in Dudley borough for 33 years, more than 20 of which were spent at Netherbrook Primary School in Netherton. He was a keen historian and was well known for leading a campaign to get the name of soldier executed by firing squad put on a memorial.

Private Joseph Bateman was executed for desertion by in 1917 and his name had never been placed on Wordsley's war memorial. But, thanks to Mr Hodgson's persistence, and documenting of his life, the private's name was inscribed. He was able to show the dedication to Pte Bateman's grand-daughter Judith Lampitt in the grounds of Holy Trinity Church in High Street.

Mr Hodgson put pen to paper and wrote a novel based on Pte Bateman and bringing justice to his name, which his family hope to one day have published in his honour.

"He was so passionate about history and he spent years working on Private Bateman as it really struck a chord with him," said Lorna. "He was a gentleman. A humble man of great integrity who would do anything for anybody."

She said that while in Cyprus, he assisted students with their English while his wife would teach them to swim. "Both retired teachers, they had ambitions of making a permanent move to the country, where they had made many, many friends," she said.

They have three children – Emma, 29, Ben, 27 and Lorna, 25 – who joined their mother in Cyprus after the accident.

Mr Hodgson's funeral will be held today, Thursday, at Calvary Church, Stallings Lane, Kingswinford, where he had been a member of the congregation for more than 15 years. It will be held at 2pm.

All will be greatly welcomed by the family and any donations towards the ongoing work with students in Cyprus can be made via the funeral directors J T Brookes & Co.

Shutter row could force shop to shut



Nick Browne outside his shop, the Vintage Gamer, which has come under threat in a council wrangle over a shutter

A COMPUTER games shop could be forced to shut after its owner became embroiled in a row with planners who told him a shutter protecting his business was inappropriate because it reinforced the fear of crime.

Nick Browne opened the Vintage Gamer shop, in Cradley, saying he wanted to help regenerate his home town and boost a shopping parade. But his roller shutter, erected to protect his valuable stock, has fallen foul of planning officials who claim it 'reinforces the fear of crime' in the area.

Fight

He has vowed to fight the decision to refuse planning permission and is planning to appeal against it.

The 30-year-old has spent £4,000 refurbishing a shop which had stood empty and run down for 15 years on Windmill Hill.

Campaigners had been calling for Dudley Council officials to provide incentives to entrepreneurs to open new stores and banish

boarded up shops in the borough.

Mr Browne says that if he can't protect his dozens of precious old arcade machines and consoles with adequate security then he will be forced to close up.

"If I can't have the shutter I'm going to have to close down – it's crazy," said Mr Browne, of Colley Gate.

He took over the shop seven months ago and to protect his business he installed a £1,000 roller shutter over the shop front – without realising he needed planning permission for it.

Around two months ago he was visited by a Dudley Council planning enforcement officer and told he needed to apply for planning permission or take the roller shutter down.

Cradley Action Group founder Richard Legiewicz, who has been helping to fight for improvements in the area, said: "We simply cannot understand why the application has been thrown out."

Late buses from Merry Hill

EXTRA late night buses will be running from Merry Hill in the run-up to Christmas. National Express has put on additional services for shoppers and workers on the four days when the centre is open until midnight.

These include services across Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Birmingham. One additional journey will run to each destination departing from Merry Hill at 00.20am on the evenings of December 19, 20, 21 and 23.

The service 4M journey from Walsall scheduled to arrive at Blackheath at 2336 will be extended to Merry Hill.

For those shoppers who choose to drive to Merry Hill, the centre is operating a free shuttle bus from the Waterfront to the centre on every day except Wednesdays from this Saturday.



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NEWS

Smell led the police to cache of cannabis plants

Forget Me Not tree appeal



Fundraising manager Jenni Fryer launching this year's Forget Me Not tree

PEOPLE can remember their loved ones and help raise funds for charity by sponsoring a light on a charity's tree of light

The Forget Me Not tree at Beacon Centre for the Blind, Sedgley, is sparkling with hundreds of lights after the official dedication ceremony and carol service last week. But it's not too late for people to sponsor a light on the tree as a tribute to somebody they have lost.

The minimum donation is £5 and they can have their loved one's name added to a book of remembrance and a light added to the tree in Wolverhampton Road East.

Beacon Centre's Jo Field said they would be accepting donations towards the tree until Christmas Eve.

Call her on 01902 880111 or email jfield@beacon4blind.co.uk for details.

A MAN who set up a cannabis growing room was caught out when his neighbours started to smell the drug.

Haze Williams initially blamed the stench on a small bag of the drug he had in his home but when the police searched the property they discovered the cannabis growing in his back room.

Ms Rhiannon Jones, prosecuting, told Wolverhampton Crown Court that the police visited William's home on Vicarage Road, Kingswinford, on Saturday, September 14, after a neighbour reported the strong smell of cannabis. The officers discovered 15 mature plants.

Worth

Ms Jones told the court that these were large plants and with an estimated annual yield of 45 grams of cannabis per plant, so in all they would be worth £6,550.

She told the court that the Crown Prosecution Service accepts that he was producing the drug for his own personal use.

Williams, aged 39 had pleaded guilty to being concerned in the production of cannabis at a previous hearing.

He was sentenced to 12 weeks in prison suspended for 12 months and ordered to complete 100 hours of unpaid work and pay £420.

Zip to park

THERE'S one through the peaks of Snowdonia, across a Thai jungle and over the pine trees of Alaska. Now a Black Country park will be joining the many attractions that have an adrenaline-pumping zipwire.

The equipment is set to be installed at Langley Park in Oldbury before the end of this year. The Friends of Langley Park have been raising money for the 80ft zip wire and its efforts were given a boost by £600 donation from chemical company Solvay Oldbury.

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At Victoria Falls, a guided walking tour is included with other options to view the spectacular falls from either a cruise, a helicopter flight or from a micro-light aircraft.

On the Botswana Safari travel in a specially adapted 10-seater open-sided safari vehicle and see a wide variety of game including monkeys, warthogs and even leopards plus the chance to see cats, giraffe and elephants - it's an experience not to be forgotten so remember to pack a camera!

A second cruise, this time along the Chobe River, almost guarantees sightings of elephant and hippo, then a visit to Cape Point passes the fishing harbour of Hout Bay. Continuing on, see the breathtakingly scenic Chapman's Peak Drive, full of rugged seascapes and cliffs to the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve.

At Cape Point itself see the confluence of the Indian and Atlantic Ocean then it's on to Boulders Beach to see the resident penguin colony.

On the Winelands tour, a visit to the small town of Franschoek is included home to South Africa's most prestigious university and where period buildings and historic streets reinforce the town's dignified atmosphere. A cellar tour and tasting at the award-winning Boschendal Wine Estate is included.

The touring holiday ends in Cape Town. Take time to explore the excellent shopping and dining available, take the cable car to the summit of Table Mountain and, weather permitting, visit Robben Island where Nelson Mandela spent most of his 27 years in incarceration.

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NEWS



A Rowley Regis woman had a lucky escape when a car smashed in to her porch Wendy Warrender says she's lucky to be alive

Chores may have saved mother

A MOTHER-OF-THREE had a lucky escape when a car collided with a van and flipped over into the porch of her house - causing bricks to fly into her lounge where she would normally have been taking a nap.

The black Vauxhall Corsa careered into the front of the house on Harvest Road, Rowley Regis, at around 11.20am on Monday. Its driver, a man in his late teens, is believed to have hit a parked white Vauxhall van as he drove down Harvest Road's hill.

The car then hit a wooden post, went through a brick wall and smashed into the porch, sending debris flying.

A brick flew through the front driver's side window of the neighbour's black Ford Escort RS Turbo. No one was inside at the time.

But a larger coping stone from the wall flew through the front window of the house and landed next to the sofa where resident Wendy Warrender, who has suffered three strokes, would normally take a daily nap.

The 57-year-old mother-of-three decided to 'potter around' instead as she was not feeling as tired as she normally does at that time.

Her decision to clean the windows in her kitchen before putting the Christmas tree up in her porch may have spared her more serious injury.

Hospital

She said: "When it happened all I heard was glass breaking and thought my Rottweiler may have knocked the cabinet over. I came into the lounge and saw it."

"The coping stone came in just where my head would usually be if I'd taken a nap. I could have been killed."

The driver suffered cuts and bruises and was taken to Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital for precautionary checks.

Fire crews doused the drive with water before leaving the scene as petrol had leaked from the black Vauxhall Corsa while it was on its side.

Structural engineers were also sent to the house to ensure there was no lasting impact. Windows were boarded up as several panes were shattered.

Shields of honour for school



Vilma Griffin, organiser for Quarry Bank Royal British Legion, presents shields to Elli Weston and Shaylee Hadlington

SCHOOLCHILDREN have been presented with memorial shields after raising more than other schools in their area towards the annual poppy appeal.

Members of Quarry Bank Royal British Legion club presented the Daniel Probyn Memorial Shield to pupils and staff at Quarry Bank Primary School.

They had managed to raise £295.80 from their November efforts.

The children were given a shield to keep and the school's name was also

engraved on a larger shield, which they will keep for a year.

The trophy is in honour of 22-year-old soldier Daniel Probyn who died in Afghanistan. Tipton-born guardsman Daniel was killed in an explosion in Garmsir, Helmand Province in 2007.

Fundraiser Gloria Donovan, from Quarry Bank Royal British Legion, congratulated the pupils on their achievement.

"It is fantastic, £295 is a lot of money for a school to raise," she said.

"They raised the most out of nine schools in the area."

The children raised the money by selling poppies and holding a fair.

The runner-up was Withymoor Primary School.

The branch has raised £25,584 to date from its poppy appeal.

"People have been very generous. We are very pleased to have raised so much," added Mrs Donovan.

Among the activities held by the branch was atombola at Asda Brierley Hill in October.

Members were joined by deputy mayor of Dudley Councillor Margaret Aston to sell poppies and tickets.

**Wishing everyone
a Merry Christmas
& a Happy New
Year**

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 Blossom Hill Sparkling Zinfandel 75cl £6.99	 Taylor's First Estate Reserve 75cl £8.99	 Cockburns Fine Ruby Port 75cl £7.49	 QC 70cl (Varieties) £3.79  QC (Varieties) 1tr £4.99	 Harvey's Bristol Cream Ltr £9.99	 Martini 75cl (Varieties) £6.49	 Croft Ltr £9.49	 Hardy's VR (Varities) 75cl Any 2 for £8.00	 Hardy's Stamp Varieties 75cl 2 for £9.00	 Yellow Tail (Varieties) 75cl 2 for £10.00				
 Jacob's Creek Varieties 75cl 2 for £10.00	 Hardy's Bin 343 75cl Cabernet Shiraz 2 for £8.00	 Blossom Hill (Varieties) 75cl 2 for £8.00	 Stowells Chardonnay Pinot Grigio & White Zinfandel, 75cl 2 for £8.00	 Oxford Landing (Varieties) 75cl 2 for £9.00	 Lindeman's Cawarra (Varieties) 75cl Any 2 for £9.00	 E & J Gallo Assorted 75cl 2 for £8.00	 Lindeman Bin 65,45 75cl (Varieties) 2 for £9.00	 Hardy's Private Bin 75cl Rose, Shiraz 2 for £8.00	 Echo Falls (Varieties) 75cl 2 for £8.00				
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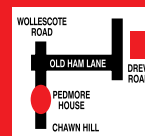
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Women seeking men

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.53 per minute plus network extras. Texts cost £1.50 per message sent.

TRACY slim dark haired beauty, petite, hardworking career, enjoys dancing, nights out, WLTm loving male who can make me laugh for an adult relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 409419

SHARON very attractive British black lady, sexy size 6 looking for white male to fall in love with. Beautiful people can be lonely too. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 409263

SAM, 35yrs, own business, sexy, loves dressing up and married, seeks discreet man for casual meetings. Can travel anywhere. ACA. Tel No: 0905 002 1961 Box No: 408297

MID naughty forties female looking fun, thrills and discreet meets, give me a call, you won't be disappointed. Any age with own accommodation. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 409109

ANITA very attractive black female, seeking mature white/Asian man to enjoy uncomplicated relationship with no ties. Any age, pls contact me, I'm very lonely. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408505

ANNA, busty mature lady seeks no strings discreet meetings with male any age or location. Tel No: 0905 002 1952 Box No: 366019

ABBA girl blonde lookalike, size 16, attractive, bubbly, OHAC, seeking solvent, refined, handsome guy with full head of hair, 5ft 9ins plus, professional and courteous. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 409151

NEETA Black beauty, classy, intelligent 21yrs, loves to enjoy life, have lots of fun and be spoilt, give me a call. Any age, looks and status. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 409101

SUSIE, seeks fifty shades of grey with guy any age but must be discreet, call and I will explain why. Tel No: 0905 002 1953 Box No: 407321

HI I'm Jo, first timer, newly divorced perfect size 10, blonde, attractive, tactile and looking to fall in love again. Age unimportant, dad welcome. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 409089

SUSIE 32yr old nurse who likes cosy nights in with a good bottle of wine and spending quality times with great company, if you feel the same pls get in touch. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408877

BABS 27yrs slender with dark haired passionate Italian who loves to dance, eat out, looking for nice n/s male to spend quality adult time with. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 407943

BUBBLY 60 plus lady, slim, fair hair, comfy in jeans and leather jacket, seeks similar male for friendship etc. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408859

JOANNA 34, in need of tic, winning, dining being treated like the princess I am, looking for sugar daddy, that someone special to love me. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408869

MARIA gorgeous outgoing bbw 27, good fun, caring, romantic, looking for that special someone to share life with. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408733

KIM attractive single lady new to area looking for meet new friends and maybe a new love interest. I have many hobbies and am interesting to know, pls call me. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408489

TAYLOR attractive very busty curvy black female looking for fun times with open-minded male who is also looking for fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408311

BETHANY 25yr old blonde, slim size 10 with great personality, looking for nice guy to share my life with, single dad welcome. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408253

HI I'm Pam, cuddly, attractive, self-sufficient, employed, looking for similar young looking, sincere male for hopeful ltr. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 407933

FEMALE many interests, seeks male, 40-55 for LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408537

28YR old female, seeking male with GSOH for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408639

68YR old lady, likes gardening, meals out, days out, looking for sincere gent to share time with. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408413

JENNY single independent attractive lady, tall and leggy, sensual and looking for very special male friend. Only genuine callers pls. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408285

CHRIS blue eyed blonde single female, lots of interests, loves travel, beach, nights in/out, looking for mature sincere gent for possible ltr. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 407615

ATTRACTIVE female, young 49, 5ft 7ins, blonde hair, blue eyes, slim, genuine, loyal, easygoing, GSOH, seeks tall, handsome male, 40-50 for fun times, friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 406135

LITTLE bit nice and definitely a little bit naughty! Imaginative curvy blonde seeks male for kisses and cuddles. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 363428

62YR old female, widowed, grey, slim, attractive, kind, outgoing, likes meals out, dancing, holidays, nights in, seeking professional gent. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 394106

CAROL 36, looking for older experienced gent 50-70yrs for fun times only, discretion assured and expected. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401853

SUE attractive lonely brunette who loves eves in/out, music, WLTm someone sincere to love and get close to, why not give me a call? Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 407021

CURVY Irish female 35yrs looking for fun, frolics, weekends away and lots of excitement with reliable male, discretion assured. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 407603

SLIM active lady, 60's, N/S, seeks honest, kind gent, 57-62 for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 407693

ANNABELLA board attractive 30 something nurse wanting healing hands for no strings fun. No TLC required. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 407449

SUE 40's female who enjoys evenings in/out looking for someone to have some fun and hopefully get close to, go on, give me a ring. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 407019

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MASON single parent, seeking female for no strings fun times, 30-45. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 409443

MALE likes nights out, holidays, seeking nice female for friendship, fun and maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 409363

GARY 40, tall, dark hair, seeks female, 30-50 for fun and LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 409207

GENEROUS male, 6ft, GSOH, loves music, DIY, seeks attractive lady to spoil and pamper. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 409019

DAVE genuine guy, 6ft, black hair, blue eyes, medium build, likes sports, gardening, music, seeks female with GSOH and genuine. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 398372

TONY 55, dark hair, 6ft, confident, outgoing, seeks mature, attractive female, 68 plus, genuine ad. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408989

FUN loving male, 47, lots to give, looking for genuine lady for LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 409159

GENT 55, slightly mad, but not bad, will make you glad you answered his ad! Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408973

TALL intelligent, professional fit guy, 50's, athletic, seeks good natured, intelligent female, 50-57 for friendship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408991

LONELY male, 55, seeks Indian/Jamaican female, 25 plus for sincere relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408957

ATTRACTIVE male, 55, seeks older female, 50-70 for close, adult fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397189

MARK 44, 6ft, dark hair, businessman, interesting, seeking sporty female for meals out, day trips, country walks etc. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408571

FUN loving male, 5ft 10ins, slim, GSOH, seeks mature female, 50-65 for meals out and daytime relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408185

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NEWS

Students raise funds for cancer charity



Dudley students are pictured outside the HQ of their new adopted charity, Dudley's White House Cancer Support

CHARITY begins at college for students who are dreaming up fundraising ideas to boost their adopted charity. Members of Dudley College students' union have picked a charity on

their doorstep to help during the next 12 months. They selected Dudley's White House Cancer Support to be their charity partner. More than 40 students arrived at the

charity headquarters in Ednam Road, Dudley, for the launch of the link-up and were ready to get started with a host of fundraising activities to boost charity coffers.

Talks being held on cuts facing performing arts

TALKS are taking place over the future of a performing arts service in Dudley amid moves to cut £178,000 from its budget.

Dudley Council is restructuring Dudley Performing Arts (DPA) service, which run music and dance concerts and classes for youngsters.

The latest cuts follow a reduction in funding for the service in 2011, which saw it forced to cancel two major music festivals, which used to attract up to 5,000 people each.

The council is facing having to make overall cuts of around £60 million over the next three years.

Dudley Performing Arts staff had been warned about the possibility of redundancy and council bosses confirmed that one of the two workers had lost their job.

Consultation

Councillor Tim Crumpton, cabinet member for children's services, said: "We have now completed an employee consultation around Dudley Performing Arts in relation to management costs and unfortunately we have to lose one post subject to a redundancy process.

A mutual leaving date has been

agreed with the member of staff concerned we wish them all the best for the future."

"We are now working hard with the management and DPA team to ensure a solid future for the service and for the children of Dudley."

He said the council remained 'fully committed' to performing arts in the borough and the 'important part that can play in young people's education'.

DPA organises an annual summer festival held in Dudley town centre each July as well as spring and winter festivals held at venues across the borough.

Checks on helicopter fleet after pub deaths

POLICE and ambulance helicopters in the West Midlands have been checked over by safety experts following the Glasgow tragedy that claimed nine lives.

Fleets have undergone rigorous safety checks, with the force's Chief Constable Chris Sims saying: "Given we operate helicopters of a very similar design and style, there were concerted efforts from the National Police Air Service to check safety.

"The messages that came back were reassurances that our helicopters are operating to a standard and continue to operate safely."

The checks were made after a Scottish police aircraft crashed into the Clutha bar.

Silence

"They were tragic events in Glasgow and I've written to express our condolences," added Mr Sims. "I cannot think of another instance when an organisation has lost its own people and are dealing with a tragedy they were very much involved in."

"I think they have dealt with it well."

Gift aims to make life more bearable



Billy Babu with the teddy bears bound for Syria

IT'S not your ordinary donation, but three giant teddy bears will be making their way to Syria as part of an initiative to help children in the country.

Billy Babu, who is handing over the cuddly gifts, is well-known for his charitable work. Earlier this year the Wolverhampton resident gave 5,000 bread rolls to the homeless in Hull driving from his home to distribute the food, and back again, in a day.

Mr Babu, will be handing over the bears to the charity at a fundraiser to be held at the Noshahi Kashmir Civic Centre in Birmingham on December 22.

Tickets for the event cost £12 and can be obtained by calling 07900584437.

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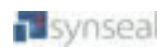


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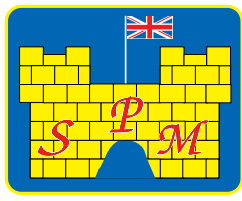
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FESTIVE FOCUS

Christmas shopping? It's just child's play

NOW let's be honest, the real joy of Christmas is seeing the kids' faces light up when they open their presents.

There are so many good choices these days, from the good old-fashioned story book to all the hi-tech toys on offer. But if you are looking for something for the younger ones why not go bright and cheerful with the cute appeal, guaranteed to win you a big aaahhh!

signal and ignition sounds. The adjustable strap is ideal to attach to pushchairs, car seats and play gyms. It's bath time and for a bit of extra fun go for the Colour Changing Ducks, RRP £7.99 (18 months plus). This squeaking, floating family changes colour in warm water.

So cute are the Kiddicare Musical Light-Up Owl, RRP £12.99, from birth. This gorgeous owl is soft to the touch and enchanting to listen to as it plays the classic Brahms lullaby, and the Sunny Safari Activity Elephant, RRP £12.99, both suitable from birth.

And for something again from birth there is the Sunny Safari Jump Playmat, RRP £29.99. This extra large playmat including textures, colours and activities for sensory development for

the would-be chef there is the Buzzing Brains Deluxe Big Kitchen, RRP £149.99, three years plus. This life-like play set includes refrigerator, freezer, oven, and microwave with interactive knobs and taps that turn and click.

In the same age group is The Buzzing Brains Doll House, RRP £49.99, which comes complete with furniture and family figures.

And to add some music there is the



Sunny Safari Activity Elephant and, left, the Musical Light-Up Owl which plays the classic Brahms lullaby



Rocking zebra will help improve your tot's balance



Doll's house comes complete with furniture and family figures

Buzzing Brains Rock Star Keyboard and Stool, RRP £29.99, three years plus. This keyboard boasts light-up keys and songs, as well as the record and play back functionality.

Lots of nice things – no doubt they will give parents a lot of fun too!



Buzzing Brains Rock Star Keyboard and Stool, RRP £29.99, it has light-up keys and record and playback facility

These are some of the ideas from Kiddicare, ideal if you don't want to venture too far away as they have a store at the Merry Hill centre, Brierley Hill or you can go online (www.kiddicare.com).

And if you don't want to break the bank there are plenty of stocking fillers on offer such as a cute electronic keyboard with colourful keys to trigger different notes, the Buzzing Brains My First Piano, RRP £3.19, for 12 months plus.

In the same age range is the Buzzing Brains Light and Sounds Mini Driver, RRP £7.99, a pretend steering wheel toy with light up mirror and realistic horn,

your baby to roll around on or share with a friend.

To keep them amused there is the Buzzing Brains Activity Table, RRP £29.99, 12 months plus. This feature-packed table top has light-up musical keys, sliders, gearshift, spinning top, flapping butterfly and lots more.

To help your tot's balance and leg muscles go for the Sunny Safari Rocking Zebra, RRP £39.99, 18 months plus. For the older ones who like to pretend play there are some ideal choices. For

Recipes for success from kitchen heroes

NOT content with sorting out the nation's fashion disasters Gok Wan is now promoting healthy Asian cuisine with his new book Gok's Wok (Ebury, hardback, £20).

There are more than 80 recipes and the emphasis is on fast and fresh dishes, ranging from the classic Thai Green Curry to zingy Vietnamese salads and Sticky Chinese Duck Buns.

TV cook Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall says he enjoys Allegra McEvedy's cooking because "like her, it's bold and brassy." I can see what he means because in her chunky family cookbook **Big Table Busy Kitchen** (Quercus, hardback, £25) there is something friendly, almost mumsy, about her hearty style of cuisine and conversational approach.

Cakes

The co-founder of the Leon real food chain who is also a patron of the Fairtrade Foundation, has produced a solid set of some 200 recipes from childhood favourites to hangover cure.

There's more to Mary Berry than cakes as she shows with **Mary Berry's Cookery Course** (DK, hardback, £25) in which the celebrated cake maker offers help to novice cooks and those who want to improve their skills with a series of classic dishes that illustrate various techniques required by a competent home cook.

Lizzie Kamenetzky's **The**



Healthy Asian recipes in Gok's Wok

Great British Bake Off Winter Kitchen (BBC Books, hardback, £20) is described as being produced by the Great British Bake Off team – though I can't detect direct involvement by Paul Hollywood or Mary Berry. But it does contain 130 recipes to help keep out the chill on long cold nights and short damp grey days. These range from hearty roasts and stews to sticky puddings and mince pies.

His mentor Raymond Blanc says Devon-born Michael Caines is one of the most inspired chefs of his generation.

Whilst some chefs have a higher profile than Caines, who remains very much 'hands-on' at his restaurants, some of the gimmick merchants could learn from his personal commitment to

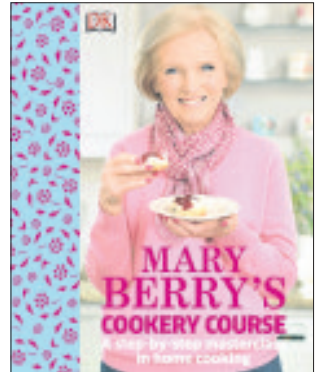
excellence. Judging by the dishes in **Michael Caines At Home** (Preface, hardback, £25) he looks for high standards in the home kitchen too.

These 100 recipes are for more confident cooks but, for those who feel up to it, Caines' book will help take them to the next level.

From cake pops to wedding cakes, Karen Sullivan introduces the world of sugarcraft with her **Step-By-Step Cake Decorating** (DK, hardback, £16.99).

She covers the necessary tools and equipment, key ingredients and techniques, before introducing a series of projects.

Caroline Bretherton's **The Family Kitchen Cookbook** (DK, hardback, £25) is the sort of



Learn with Mary Berry's Cookery Course

recipe book that could become a kitchen Bible. I can see it in ten years time, propped up and well-thumbed, looking slightly battered with a few stains and lots of scribbled notes inside, having inspired hundreds of family meals.

It is a weighty tome but it is stuffed with more than 700 straightforward recipes to suit a range of tastes. It includes dedicated sections on food for fussy eaters, for very young children, celebrations, plus cakes, bakes and puddings, and much more.

It is superbly illustrated throughout and also includes nutritional information. If looking for a general, covers everything cookbook, this is the one.

Leon Burakowski

FESTIVE FOCUS

Join another boy wizard to relive Merlin's magic

I RECKON there are a lot of folks missing Merlin on Saturday nights. Latest BBC blockbuster Atlantis is but a shadow of the Beeb's fantasy drama based on the stories of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.

Back in 2008 when Colin Morgan first appeared on our screens as the awkward young wizard I was ready to dismiss it as a Harry Potter inspired excuse to use left-over Robin Hood props. However, the series grew on me despite the huge liberties the writers took with Arthurian legend.

Central to its success was the buddy relationship between Morgan's Merlin and Bradley James as the headstrong Arthur. Then we had a pair of excellent villains in Anthony Head's Uther and the raven-haired Irish actress Katie McGrath as the misunderstood Morgana.

Throw into the mix some pretty good special effects for a TV show, a grumpy Richard Wilson as Gaius and John Hurt as the voice of the Dragon Kilgarrah, and it made for a great show.

It can be relived in **Merlin: The Complete Collection Series One to Five (12)**, a boxed set with 27 discs featuring every episode plus bonus material, lasting a whopping 47 hours. It's RRP is £59.49 but I reckon the fans will be able to find it even cheaper, which works out pretty good value. Altogether now: 'Fus Ro Dah!'



Colin Morgan as Merlin, left, with Bradley James as the young King Arthur

The Escape Artist (15), from Spooks writer David Wolstencroft, has done for long hot baths what Psycho did for showers. You will never feel quite so comfortable in one again after this tense and creepy crime thriller.

David Tennant plays a rather smug brilliant high-flying barrister with a perfect family life until it all goes horribly wrong when he refuses to shake the hand of the psychopathic killer who he has defended in court.

With strong support from Sophie Okonedo as his rival brief and Toby Kebbell as

the murderer, this is a gripping combination of courtroom drama and horror.

It lasts more than two hours over two discs including cast and crew interviews. **From Up On Poppy Hill (U)** comes from Japan's remarkable Studio Ghibli, the Nippon Disney, who are makers of beautifully crafted animated movies since the 1960s.

Poppy Hill, directed by Goro Miyazaki and adapted from a manga (comic) by his father Hayao, is the latest release from the studio that brought such fantasy cult classics as My Neighbor

Totoro and Spirited Away. However, Poppy Hill belongs to a more thoughtful strand of Ghibli's output and is not one of their fantastic flights of fancy.

Instead, it is a gentle exploration of the growing relationship between a boy and girl in 1960s Japan and reflects some of the struggles that nation faced in rebuilding itself after the Second World War.

Not for those who seek monsters and robots, but still lovely to look at and enjoyable.

Leon Burakowski

These stocking fillers are music to your ears

SPORTS fans in particular would benefit from the Kaos PDR 1 portable radio, a pocket-sized digital and FM radio with rechargeable battery.

But if you like music, you should also be happy with the sound quality of this small but versatile radio that picks up DAB stations.

The PDR 1 is easy to operate and also has the benefit of a Micro SD card slot, enabling the recording of radio programmes, ideal if you are unexpectedly interrupted five minutes into The Archers.

MP3

The recordings can then be listened to on the player or the MP3 files can be transferred to a computer via the built-in USB port if you want to archive your recording.

The supplied headphones also act as an antenna, so don't expect to use the PDR 1 as a bathroom or kitchen radio via a plug-in speaker because the signal will die unless you're right next to it. The radio does not feel robust but does have a good battery life and a decent graphic display.

For sports fans who want to keep abreast of the scores or musos who can't bare to be separated from Radio 6, this is a good gadget at a good price, widely available on the net for under £50.

SleepPhones from the



The Kaos PDR 1 DAB/FM radio



Ear warmer headphones from Midland

superbly named American company AcousticSheep aims to help those who need music to get off to sleep but can't abide chunky headphones or the feel of earbuds.

Basically, it is a washable wicking headband with integrated wireless padded speakers. The sound quality was OK and the device pairs via Bluetooth with many smartphones and computers. There is a micro USB charging cable.

You can also download relaxing audio from the maker's own website.

One important point though, if you share your bed with someone else then

they will have to be pretty understanding because the sound does leak somewhat.

Also, I am not totally convinced I could fall asleep with something that feels like a pair of socks wrapped around my head, or as AcousticSheep call them: pyjamas for your ears.

You can find them online for under £70. The wired version costs around £29.

If you want to keep your ears warm this winter whilst also enjoying your favourite sounds, you could try Midland's SubZero combined earwarmer and hi-fi stereo headset.

Available in a series of designs, from red to camou-

flage, this iPhone compatible and adjustable set of comfy cans slip onto the back of the head, the band on your nape, and the furry ear pads really do keep your lugs snug.

They come complete with inline mic for taking calls and another cable with two pin plug for connecting to devices such as walkie-talkies. These winter warmers should be a must-have gadget for joggers who brave freezing temperatures.

Available from www.nevadamusical.co.uk, they make a fine stocking filler for £12.95.

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What's On! Stourbridge

Magic duo bring Las Vegas show

AMERICAN masters of magic Penn & Teller are returning to the UK with their spectacular Las Vegas show.

The pair have defied labels – and sometimes physics and good taste – by redefining the magic genre of entertainment, bringing lots of humour and playing a major role in making illusions hip again.

Penn & Teller will only be performing at two venues outside London and this will include Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre on June 15.

Dame Julie talks of favourite things

DAME Julie Andrews will be appearing at Birmingham's NIA next year but don't anticipate her singing My Favourite Things.

An Evening with Julie Andrews on May 24 is part of what is described as a speaking tour by the 78-year-old Surrey-born star of stage and screen.

She will share anecdotes whilst looking back at highlights from her career including the classic movie musicals Mary Poppins and The Sound of Music.

X Factor rocker in home city concert

WOLVERHAMPTON'S X Factor rocker Joseph Whelan will be bringing his Homecoming Xmas Show to The Slade Rooms in his home city on Friday, December 20.

Tickets are priced £5.50 for the gig by the singer, songwriter and guitar player.

Strictly sensational dancing line-up on the ballroom tour

Thriller nights at Jackson tribute



A DANCER strike an iconic pose associated with the late great King of Pop Michael Jackson, whose music and dance moves are celebrated in West End hit Thriller, which is coming to Birmingham this festive season.

The all-singing all-dancing cast will include Cleo Higgins, the Birmingham-born singer who briefly found fame in the teen group Cleopatra before hitting the headlines again with her appearance on The Voice.

The show will be staged at the ICC Hall 1, part of the same city centre complex as the Symphony Hall, from this Saturday to January 5. See thsh.co.uk for details.

THE FIRST celebrities to join the Strictly Come Dancing Live Tour 2014 – including a show at Birmingham NIA next month – have been announced.

Former England Rugby World Cup winner Ben Cohen, Coronation Street star Natalie Gumede and actor and funny man Mark Benton will be wowing the audience when the tour visits Birmingham on January 17.

Also taking part will be Natalie's main rivals for the glitterball, model Abbey Clancy – who got the perfect score for her disco routine on the TV show – and TV presenter Susanna Reid.

Host

The celebrity dancer line-up so far features from the early rounds Deborah Meaden and from series ten Westlife singer Nicky Byrne.

Alongside the celebrity dancers, Craig Revel Horwood, Len Goodman and Bruno Tonioli are back as the tour's formidable judges.

They will be on hand to give their expert feedback and all important scores to the celebrities and their dance pro partners.

They will be joined by former Strictly favourite Lisa Riley, who returns to the dance floor as host of the 2014 tour.

Ben Cohen said: "I love to



Natalie Gumede keeps dancing at Birmingham NIA test myself and Strictly has certainly been a challenge."

Natalie Gumede added: "I'm hugely excited to be part of the Strictly tour, it's the perfect excuse to keep dancing! Dancing for all the fans who have voted to keep me in the show will be really special, I can't wait."

See thenia.co.uk for further details.

Stacey flying in to NIA as Tinkerbell

QUEEN of the Jungle and X Factor finalist Stacey Solomon makes her theatrical debut in Birmingham tomorrow when Peter Pan – The Never Ending Story opens at the NIA.

The singing daughter of Dagenham will be playing Tinkerbell in the high-flying fantasy based on JM Barrie's classic creation.

The song that she will be singing as she flies the rather appropriate You Raise Me Up. Stacey will also narrate the show which will be staged Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

American music legends plan gigs

TWO major American stars of the music scene for the past five decades are coming to Birmingham next year.

Jazz and soul legend George Benson, a vocal and guitar great, will perform at Birmingham Symphony Hall on June 22. His hits include Give Me The Night and Never Give Up On A Good Thing.

Singer-songwriter James Taylor brings his band to the LG Arena on September 26.

Little Mix to start tour at LG Arena

ALL-girl pop group Little Mix will kick off their 2014 tour at Birmingham LG Arena on May 16.

Perrie, Jesy, Leigh-Anne and Jade have released two albums, debut DNA and Salute, both top 10 chart successes. They had two no.1 UK singles and made a better US chart debut than The Spice Girls.

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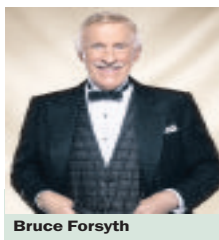
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Strictly Come Dancing

BBC1, 6.40pm

Whether it was Susanna Reid being possessed by the spirit of the paso doble in Blackpool, Natalie Gumede wowing us with a Charleston, or just the expression on Brendan Cole's face when the judges suggested his rumba with Sophie Ellis-Bextor wasn't quite raunchy enough, this year's Strictly Come Dancing has provided us with plenty of memorable moments. In our eyes, all the celebs are winners, but sadly only four can make it to next week's final and be in with a chance of getting their mitts on that mirrorball trophy.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Food & Drink. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **12.45** Saturday Sportsday. **1.00** BBC News; Regional News; Weather. **1.15** Gymnastics. Highlights of the World Cup event from Glasgow. **4.00** Final Score. **5.30** BBC News; Regional News; Weather. **5.50** Pointless Celebrities.

6.40 **Strictly Come Dancing.** Bruce Forsyth and Tess Daly host the semi-final.

8.20 **Atlantis.** Jason helps himself to an abandoned feast, which causes him to start demonstrating some seriously strange behaviour, and it falls to Hercules and Pythagoras to save their friend.

9.05 **Casualty.** A young couple seek refuge at a farm for the birth of their baby, while a man receives an electric shock from a Christmas tree, disrupting Sam and Tom's wedding plans.

9.55 **The National Lottery Live.** Chris Evans reveals the results of the Lotto and the Thunderball.

10.05 **BBC News;** Weather.

10.25 **Match of the Day.** Highlights of the latest Premier League fixtures, which included Manchester City v Arsenal at the Etihad Stadium and Newcastle United v Southampton at St James' Park; National Lottery Update.

11.55 **The Football League Show.** Manish Bhasin presents highlights and all the goals from today's fixtures in the Championship, League One and League Two, including Leicester City v Burnley.

1.05 Weatherview. **1.10** BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 This is BBC Two. **6.35** **Film:** Teacher's Pet. (2004) **7.45** **Film:** Anything But Christmas. (2012) **9.15** **Film:** Animal Farm. (1954) **10.30** Reel History of Britain. (R) **11.00** Animal Park. (R) **12.00** Christmas Kitchen with James Martin. (R) **12.45** Christmas Kitchen with James Martin. (R) **1.30** Christmas Kitchen with James Martin. (R) **2.15** Coast. (R) **3.10** Doctor Who Mastermind. (R) **3.40** Weakest Link. (R) **4.30** Flog It! (R) **5.30** **Film:** Tron. (1982)

7.00 **Me, You and Doctor Who: A Culture Show Special.** Matthew Sweet examines the enduring appeal and cultural impact of the long-running sci-fi series, with contributions by Matt Smith, Mark Ravenhill and Ken Livingstone.

8.00 **Film:** Iron: Legacy. (2010) **Premiere.** A man searching for his father is sucked into a computer-generated world and must compete in gladiatorial combat. Sci-fi adventure, with Jeff Bridges and Garrett Hedlund.

9.55 **The Science of Doctor Who.** Professor Brian Cox examines the science behind the long-running sci-fi series and explores the physics that allows the Doctor to travel through space and time. (R)

10.55 **The Wrong Mans.** A case of mistaken identity catapults two council employees into the middle of a deadly criminal conspiracy. Comedy thriller, with James Corden and Matthew Baynton. (R)

11.25 **The Wrong Mans.** Sam and Phil try to rescue Mr Stevens' wife. (R)

11.55 **The Wrong Mans.** (R) **12.25** **Film:** Shoot at the Devil. (1976) **2.35** This is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Babar and the Adventures of Badou. **6.10** The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That. (R) **6.25** The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan. (R) **6.50** Dino Dan. (R) **7.00** Animals. (R) **7.10** Animals. (R) **7.15** Text Santa: Help with Hattitude. (R) **7.25** Bookaboo. **7.35** Horrid Henry. (R) **7.45** Text Santa: Help with Hattitude. (R) **7.50** Kick Buttowski - Suburban Daredevil. **8.00** Kick Buttowski - Suburban Daredevil. **8.15** Bottom Knockers Street. **8.30** Munch Bax. **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** The Home of Fabulous Cakes. (R) **10.30** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **11.25** ITV News. **11.30** **Film:** Columbo: Agenda for Murder. (1990) **1.30** Doc Martin. (R) **2.30** **Film:** Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban. (2004) **5.05** The Big Christmas Reunion.

6.05 **Regional Programme;** Weather.

6.15 **ITV News;** Weather.

6.30 **New You've Been Framed!**

7.00 **The Chase: Celebrity Special.** With Arlene Phillips, Diarmuid Gavin, Helen Skelton and Mickey Flanagan.

8.00 **The X Factor.** The three remaining acts head to Wembley Arena to battle it out in the first part of the final, featuring performances by the Killers and Tom Odell. Dermot O'Leary hosts. Concludes tomorrow at 7.30pm.

10.05 **The Jonathan Ross Show.**

11.10 **ITV News;** Weather.

11.25 **Take Me Out.** A rugby player, a student, a Morris dancer and a security adviser take part. Last in the series. (R)

12.50 Jackpot247. **3.00** The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. (R) **3.45** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.15 The Hoobs. (R) **6.40** Beach Volleyball. (R) **7.30** Survival of the Fittest. **8.00** The Morning Line. **9.00** The American Football Show. **10.00** Frasier. (R) **10.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **11.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.55** The Simpsons. (R) **12.25** Heston's Fantastical Christmas. (R) **1.30** Channel 4 Racing. **4.00** Come Dine with Me. (R)

6.05 **Come Dine with Me.** Fun-loving salesman Charlie Spiteri hosts the final festive dinner party in south-east London, hoping to impress his guests with a three-bird roast and a snow machine. (R)

6.35 **Channel 4 News.**

7.05 **Marvel's Agents of SHIELD.** Coulson takes the war back to Centipede, and this time he brings in Mike Peterson for some super-soldier support. As they get closer to the truth, startling secrets are revealed. (R)

8.00 **Cornwall: Walking Through History.** Tony Robinson treks along the coastline between Plymouth in Devon and Falmouth, learning about the smuggling trade in Cornwall during the late 18th century. Last in the series.

9.00 **Psychopath Night.** Documentary going inside the minds of psychopaths, finding out how to spot them and counting down the top 10 mentally deranged movie characters, as selected by experts.

10.55 **Film: Clear and Present Danger.** (1994) Thriller, starring Harrison Ford.

1.35 Stand Up for the Week. (R) **2.20** Fresh Meat. (R) **3.05** The Silent City. (R) **3.15** Hollyoaks. (R) **5.25** 90210.

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.00** Power Rangers: Megaforce. **10.35** Sluggert. **11.00** The Great Christmas Toy Giveaway. (R) **1.05** Inside Hollywood. **1.10** World's Scariest Weather. (R) **2.05** **Film:** Will You Merry Me? (2008) **Film:** Mistletoe Over Manhattan. (2011) Christmas fantasy, starring Tricia Helfer and Greg Bryk.

7.15 **Film: The Real St Nick.** (2012) **Premiere.** A nurse falls in love with a psychiatric patient who thinks he is Santa, and tries to discover his real identity. Romantic comedy, with Torrey DeVitto and Callard Harris.

8.55 **5 News Weekend.**

9.00 **The Bible.** The Jews are forced into exile and slavery in Babylon. Daniel is thrown into the lion's den and the Angel Gabriel tells Mary she has been chosen to bear the Son of God.

10.50 **Film: Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves.** (1991) An outlawed English nobleman recruits a group of bandits to fight for justice and protect the downtrodden. Action adventure, with Kevin Costner, Alan Rickman and Morgan Freeman.

1.50 SuperCasino. Live interactive gaming. **3.10** Secrets of the Vanishing Sphinx. Investigating how and why the Egyptians built the sculpture. (R) **4.00** Wildlife SOS. (R) **4.20** Make It Big. (R) **4.50** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **5.00** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.10** Hana's Helpline. (R) **5.20** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.25** The Funky Valley Show. (R) **5.40** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **5.50** Hana's Helpline. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.00 Winter Wipeout **8.00** Top Gear **9.00** Russell Howard's Good News **10.00** **Film:** Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy (2004) **11.35** Family Guy

BBC Four
7.00 Frozen Planet **8.00** Shipwrecks: Britain's Sunken History **9.00** Sorgen **11.00** Definitely Dusted

ITV2
3.00 The Only Way Is Essexmas **4.05** I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here Now! Trials and Tribulations **5.10** You've Been Framed! Christmas **5.40** **Film:** Johnny English (2003) **7.25** **Film:** The Perfect Storm (2000) **10.05** The Xtra Factor **11.05** Celebrity Juice: Christmas Special

ITV3
3.45 **Film:** Columbo: Any Old Port in a Storm (1973) **5.45** A Touch of Frost **8.00** Lewis **10.00** Bomb Girls **11.00** Agatha Christie's Marple

ITV4
2.00 **Film:** The Appaloosa (1966) **4.00** Storage Wars **4.55** GT Academy **5.55** I Want That Car **6.55** **Film:** Where Eagles Dare (1969) **10.00** **Film:** Age of Heroes (2011)

E4
2.00 **Film:** Never Been Kissed (1999) **4.05** How I Met Your Mother **5.05** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** 2 Broke Girls **7.00** How I Met Your Mother **7.30** Suburgatory **8.00** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** **Film:** Die Hard (1988) **11.40** The Inbetweeners

Film4
2.45 Cleopatra (1963) **7.15** The Golden Child (1986) Fantasy adventure, starring Eddie Murphy and Charles Dance. **9.00** Fracture (2007) Thriller, starring Anthony Hopkins. **11.15** Donkey Punch (2008)

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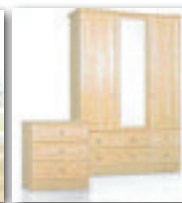


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What's On!

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CHOICE



Gary Lineker

Sports Personality of the Year 2013 BBC1, 7.40pm

Last week we celebrated 60 years of the BBC Sports Personality of the Year award with a documentary featuring some of the show's most memorable moments. A few more amazing memories could be created in tonight's edition when Gary Lineker, Gabby Logan and Clare Balding host the 2013 programme from the First Direct arena in Leeds. Favourite to lift the trophy this time round is Andy Murray, thanks in no small part to him becoming the first British man to win Wimbledon for 77 years.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.30** Match of the Day. **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** Fern Britton Meets Ken Dodd. **11.00** Wanted Down Under. **11.45** Helicopter Heroes Down Under. **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. **1.00** BBC News: Weather. **1.15** Regional Programme. **2.15** Bargain Hunt. **3.00** Escape to the Country. **3.45** Christmas Supermarket Secrets. **4.45** Liffeline. **4.55** Songs of Praise. **5.30** BBC News: Regional News. **5.55** Weather.

6.00 Countryfile. Matt Baker visits Cornwall's Pridoux Place stately home, where US soldiers prepared for D-Day, and Helen Skelton finds out why artists flock to the south west for inspiration. Including Weather for the Week Ahead. **7.00** Strictly Come Dancing: The Results. Tess Daly and Claudia Winkelman reveal which couples have secured a place in the final and who will be hanging up their dancing shoes.

7.40 Sports Personality of the Year 2013. Gary Lineker, Gabby Logan and Clare Balding present this year's ceremony live from the First Direct Arena in Leeds, where the successor to Sir Bradley Wiggins will be crowned. Subsequent programmes subject to change.

10.00 BBC News: Regional News: Weather. **10.25** Match of the Day 2. Including highlights of Tottenham Hotspur v Liverpool.

11.35 Film: Adventureland. (2008) Teen comedy, starring Jesse Eisenberg and Kristen Stewart. **1.15** Weatherview. **1.20** BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 This Is BBC Two. **6.55** Film: The Valley of Gwangi. (1968) **8.30** Life in a Cottage Garden with Carol Klein. **9.00** Life in a Cottage Garden with Carol Klein. **9.30** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.00** Christmas Kitchen with James Martin. **11.45** Christmas Kitchen with James Martin. **12.30** EastEnders. **2.20** Film: Around the World in 80 Days. (1956) **5.05** Flog It! **5.55** Ski Sunday.

6.40 Sports Personality of the Year at 60. Gary Lineker presents a look at the history of the ceremony, which has become a sports and broadcasting institution since first being held in 1954. (R)

7.40 The Great British Sewing Bee Christmas Special. Judges Patrick Grant and May Martin reunite with the four semi-finalists to show how to make gifts and decorations, including a teddy bear, a gardening belt and a satchel.

8.40 Film: The Duchess. (2008) An 18th-century duchess enduring a troubled marriage is driven into the arms of a prominent politician. Drama, with Keira Knightley, Ralph Fiennes and Dominic Cooper. **10.20** Qi XL. Extended edition. With Victoria Wood, Richard Osman and Jason Manford.

11.05 Hebburn. A national newspaper publishes an extract from Jack's pregnancy diary. (R) **11.35** Never Mind the Buzzcocks. Music quiz. (R)

12.05 Sign Zone: The Culture Show: Sylvie Guillem – Force of Nature. (R) **12.35** Countryfile. (R) **1.30** Holy City. (R) **2.30** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Babar and the Adventures of Badou. **6.10** The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That. **6.25** The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That. **6.35** Dino Dan. **6.50** Dino Dan. **7.00** Canimals. **7.10** Canimals. **7.15** Text Santa: Help with Hattitude. **7.25** Scooby. **7.35** Horrid Henry. **7.45** Text Santa: Help with Hattitude. **7.50** Victorious. **8.15** Bottom Knockout Street. **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Storage Hoarders. **10.30** Sunday Side Up. **11.30** Sunday Scoop. **12.30** ITV News: Weather.

12.35 Inside the National Trust. **1.35** Let's Do Christmas with Gino & Mel. **2.35** Love Your Garden. **3.35** The X Factor. **5.40** You've Been Framed! (R)

6.05 Regional Programme: Weather.

6.15 ITV News: Weather. **6.30** The Chase: Celebrity X Factor.

7.30 The X Factor Results. The two finalists battle it out once more before Dermot O'Leary announces the winner. With music by One Direction, Katy Perry, and Gary Barlow with Elton John. Last in the series.

9.30 Through the Christmas Keyhole. Keith Lemon rummages through the homes of three mystery celebrities.

10.30 ITV News: Weather. **10.45** Film: Hellboy II: The Golden Army. (2008) A Action Fantasy sequel directed by Guillermo del Toro, starring Ron Perlman.

12.50 The Store. **2.50** Motorsport UK. **3.40** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show: 5 Days of Christmas. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.10 The Hoobs. (R) **6.35** The American Football Show. **7.30** Anglesey Sandman Triathlon. (R) **8.00** Jamie's Money Saving Meals. **8.30** Jamie's Money Saving Meals. **9.00** Jamie's Money Saving Meals. **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** The Big Bang Theory. **1.00** The Big Bang Theory. **1.30** The Simpsons. **2.00** The Simpsons. **2.30** Gadget Man. **3.05** Film: Diary of a Wimpy Kid. (2010) Family comedy, starring Zachary Gordon.

5.00 Channel 4 News. **5.20** Film: Fred Claus. (2007) Santa reluctantly agrees to bail his selfish estranged brother out of jail – on condition he helps to make toys for Christmas. Comedy, starring Vince Vaughn and Paul Giamatti.

7.30 Britain's Killer Storms. Feature-length documentary-drama telling the story of five major storms that battered the nation throughout 2012, hearing from people who survived them.

9.00 Homeland. As Lockhart's confirmation looms, Carrie infiltrates Tehran to support the mission, but Brody's loyalty wavers when he is reunited with a familiar face from his past.

10.00 Film: Your Highness. (2011) Premiere. Two princes – one a dashing hero, the other a selfish out – go on a quest to rescue a princess from an evil wizard. Fantasy comedy, with Danny McBride and James Franco.

12.05 Alan Carr: Chatty Man. Guests include Seann Walsh and Michael Buble. **1.00** American Football Live. All the action from a match in the NFL. **4.45** KOTV Boxing Weekly. Lee Maskin. **5.00** Jason Booth. (R) **5.15** Countdown. (R) **5.55** Suburgatory.

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! Peppa Pig. **6.05** Roary the Racing Car. **6.15** Fifi and the Floortots. **6.25** Bubble Guppies. **6.40** The Mr Men Show. **6.50** Chloe's Closet. **7.00** Roobarb and Custard Too. **7.10** Bananas in Pyjamas. **7.20** Bert and Ernie's Great Adventures. **7.25** Make Way for Noddy. **7.40** City of Friends. **7.50** Mio Mao. **7.55** Little Princess. **8.10** The Adventures of Bottle Top Bill and His Best Friend Corky. **8.20** Angelina Ballerina. **8.40** Rupert Bear. **8.55** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. **9.10** Oily the Little White Van. **9.15** Jelly Jam. **9.30** LazyTown. **10.00** Power Rangers: Super Samurai. **10.35** Sluggert. **11.00** Inside Hollywood. **11.05** Stop! Police Interceptors. **12.10** Film: Battle of the Bulbs. (2010)

1.55 Film: A Star for Christmas. (2012) **3.40** Film: The Polar Express. (2004) **5.40** Film: A Christmas Carol: The Musical. (2004) Musical, starring Kelsey Grammer, Jennifer Love Hewitt, Jason Alexander, Jane Krakowski and Jesse L. Martin.

7.25 Film: Ghost Rider. (2007) Fantasy thriller based on the comic-book, starring Nicolas Cage, Eva Mendes and Wes Bentley. Edited for violence and flashing images.

9.25 5 News Weekend. **9.30** Britain's Favourite Christmas Songs. Festive music countdown. (R)

12.30 The Abba Years. **1.30** SuperCasino. **3.10** The Gadget Show. **4.00** Wildlife SOS. **4.25** Make It Big. **4.50** Roary the Racing Car. **5.00** Angels of Jarm. **5.05** Hana's Helpline. **5.20** Angels of Jarm. **5.25** The Funky Valley Show. **5.40** Roary the Racing Car. **5.50** Hana's Helpline. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three **7.00** Doctor Who: The Ultimate Guide. **8.00** Great Movie Mistakes 2013. **10.00** Family Guy. **10.25** The Revolution Will Be Televised. **10.55** Family Guy. **11.20** American Dad!

BBC Four **7.00** Jett! When Britain Ruled the Skies. **9.00** Lou Reed Remembered. **10.00** David Bowie – Five Years. **11.30** Evidently – John Cooper Clarke

ITV2 **3.30** I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here Now! Crown Jewels. **4.30** You've Been Framed at Christmas. **5.30** Film: Two Weeks Notice. (2002) **7.30** Film: Land of the Lost. (2009) **9.30** The Xtra Factor. **10.30** Film: The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift. (2006)

ITV3 **3.20** The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes. **4.30** Lewis. **6.40** Agatha Christie's Poirot. **9.00** Lewis. **11.00** A Touch of Frost

ITV4 **1.25** Film: The Story of Dr Wassell. (1944) **4.10** Film: Blues Brothers 2000. (1998) **6.35** Storage Wars. **7.35** Tim Vine's Punslinger. **9.00** Film: City Slickers. (1991) **11.20** Didier Drogba: Sports Life Stories

E4 **4.55** Film: Dear John. (2010) **7.00** The Big Bang Theory. **10.00** The Inbetweeners. **11.10** Rude Tube: Epic Fails

Film4 **3.05** Romancing the Stone. (1984) **5.10** Bride Wars. (2009) **6.50** Step Up 3. (2010) Dance drama sequel, starring Rick Malambri. **9.00** Battle: Los Angeles. (2011) A platoon of soldiers is sent into battle against an alien invasion force that has landed on America's west coast. Sci-fi thriller, starring Aaron Eckhart. **11.15** Compliance. (2012)

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The ancient city of Caesarea is the first visit where a guided tour is included. Built by King Herod as capital of Roman Judea, it was the biggest port in the Eastern Mediterranean and today has a host of superb remains to explore.

Then it's on to the amazing city of Acre. Explore the beautifully vaulted and huge Knights Halls which are in a state of almost unrivalled preservation and display medieval European military architecture. A stop in Nazareth is then made to visit the great church of the annunciation before continuing on to Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee.

Crossing the Sea of Galilee by boat a visit is made to Capernaum, where Jesus lived, and nearby is Tabgha, the site of the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. Overlooking the whole area is the Mount of Beatitudes, where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount.

Surrounded by haunting desert scenery is the Dead Sea. Take a dip and bob like a cork – definitely one of life's must-do experiences! Then journey to the spectacular fortress of Masada, the site of one of the ancient Roman's greatest sieges and where the desert climate has preserved the site and the eight Roman encampments surrounding the fortress.

In Jerusalem there's so much to see and experience. Visit the Mount of Olives and the world's oldest continually used cemetery for a panoramic view of the ancient city, punctuated by the beautiful Dome of the Rock where Muhammad rose to heaven.

After touring the Garden of Gethsemane, enter the warren of streets and alleyways that make up the Old City. Visit the Western Wall and walk along the Via Dolorosa before finally arriving at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre built over Golgotha where Jesus was crucified. The decoration here is astounding and contains the final five Stations of the Cross, the church is uniquely shared between the Catholic, Orthodox and Armenian churches.

A visit to the Yad Vashem is where the Holocaust memorial is located and the Shrine of the Book where the Dead Sea Scrolls are displayed.

Finally, arriving in Bethlehem, visit the Church of the Nativity and Shepherd's Fields. It is one of the oldest churches in the Holy Land still in use and marks the site where the Virgin Mary is said to have given birth to Jesus.

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Film Choices

MONDAY

Cliffhanger, ITV, 11.05pm

A retired mountain rescue expert is drawn into a battle of wits with a psychopathic criminal searching for a \$100million fortune lost in the Rockies - and puts his life on the line as he negotiates the treacherous mountains in a bid to stay one step ahead of the crook. Action thriller, starring Sylvester Stallone, John Lithgow, Janine Turner and Michael Rooker. (1993)

TUESDAY

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, ITV, 7.30pm

The adolescent wizard is unexpectedly chosen to represent Hogwarts School in a prestigious magical tournament, despite being legally too young to enter. He joins champions of three magical academies to face deadly monsters in a series of challenges. Meanwhile, the followers of the dreaded Lord Voldemort plot to restore their master to the land of the living. Fourth instalment of the fantasy saga, starring Daniel Radcliffe, Robbie Coltrane, Ralph Fiennes, Michael Gambon, Rupert Grint and Robert Pattinson. (2005)

WEDNESDAY

The Terminator, Channel 5, 10pm

A cyborg assassin is sent on a murderous mission back in time to the 20th century, where he wreaks havoc while searching for his intended victim - a woman whose unborn son is destined to lead the human race in a war against machines. However, a soldier has also been sent from the future to protect her. James Cameron's sci-fi thriller, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Michael Biehn. (1984)



Tamara Drewe, Friday, BBC2, 11.05pm

THURSDAY

Mistletoe Over Manhattan, Channel 5, 1.25pm

Santa Claus's wife goes to New York to perform a Christmas miracle and give her husband fresh inspiration. She befriends a cop who is in the middle of a divorce and offers to become a nanny to his children. She then discovers he still loves his wife, and tries to find a way to bring them back together. Seasonal fantasy, starring Tricia Helfer and Greg Bryk. (2011)

FRIDAY

Tamara Drewe, BBC2, 11.05pm

A woman returns to the sleepy village where she grew up, having transformed from an awkward teenager to a successful and confident journalist. She instantly becomes the object of obsession for every man in the neighbourhood, while her sex life becomes a source of fascination for two local girls. Comedy based on Posy Simmonds' comic strip, with Gemma Arterton, Dominic Cooper and Tamsin Greig. (2010)

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The Sonoma and Napa Valleys, sprinkled with pretty towns and wineries, is where so many of the delicious wines are produced - and a visit to a vineyard is featured on the itinerary.

Less well-known perhaps is the capital of California, Sacramento, at the heart of old-fashioned 'gold country', which was also a major railroad centre. The 49ers who came to seek their fortunes over 150 years ago would have been at home in the Gold Rush town Yreka, that is also visited.

Oregon is the next destination with hotel accommodation booked at the riverside town of Grant's Pass and the chance to see one of North America's bluest, deepest lakes, including the breathtaking 'Rim Drive'.

A highlight for many visitors to this part of the West Coast has to be the forests of giant primordial redwood trees, some of which stand over 300 feet tall. There is even a drive through Redwoods National Park and that journey continues along Pacific Coast Highway 1 to eventually reach Fort Bragg on the spectacular Mendocino coast.

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Pick of the Week

Murray aims to make it a truly smashing year

Heroes and villains - they're all on display in Sports Personality of the Year 2013, which this year celebrates its 60th anniversary while showcasing the most important sporting events of the past 12 months.

Whenever the show is broadcast, fans know that Christmas is just around the corner - but who will be celebrating the festive season with a shiny new trophy on the mantelpiece as well as a turkey in the oven?

During the programme, eight awards will be presented: Team of the Year, Coach of the Year, Unsung Hero, Overseas Personality of the Year, The Helen Rollason Award (a special BBC trophy for outstanding courage and achievement in the face of adversity, named after the sports presenter who died of cancer aged just 43 in 1999), and the Young Sports Personality of the Year Award. The latter is given to an outstanding competitor, aged 16 or under, selected from nominations made by Blue Peter viewers.

Watch out too for the 60th Anniversary Diamond Award, which will be handed to a sporting legend.

However, the most coveted of the lot continues to be, of course, the Sports Personality of the Year award itself.

Whether the next sportsman or woman to have their name engraved on the trophy turns out to be as laid-back as last year's winner remains to be seen.

Bradley Wiggins was clearly thrilled that the public had voted for him (he called it "probably his greatest achievement"), but unlike some previous winners, he wasn't camera-shy or stuck for words.

Perhaps Chris Froome, his successor as the Tour de France champion, may come out of top this time round. However, it would be very tough on Andy Murray following his Wimbledon win in the summer if he missed out - he's currently favourite with the bookies too.

What may go against Murray is the fact that he hasn't played much tennis since then; he's been injured for some time, which may keep him out of the voters' thoughts.

Some naysayers may suggest that the competition isn't so hot this time

round. After all, last year's ceremony took place just months after the London Olympics, and arguments could have been made for a number of candidates from that event alone in the build-up to last December's evening.

But the BBC's director of sport, Barbara Slater, reckons it will be as exciting as ever: "The year includes major events such as the Ashes, World Athletics Championships, Rugby League World Cup and Women's European Football Championship as well as a packed calendar across all sporting disciplines, so we're looking forward to another exciting show."

This time, cameras, crew and celebs are heading to Leeds' First Direct Arena, and we can expect all the usual reports and highlights, although an iconic show will be missing - Sue Barker.

A few months ago she announced her decision to step down from the show, but she's leaving it in very good hands - Gary Lineker, Clare Balding and Gabby Logan are the experienced trio in charge.



Sports Personality of the Year 2013, Sunday, BBC1, 9pm

Best of the Rest

MONDAY

Kirstie's Crafty Christmas Channel 4, 8pm

These days, Kirstie Allsopp and Phil Spencer aren't just property experts, they're also lifestyle gurus. Ms Allsopp started the trend by showing us that she's a dab-hand at all things crafty, demonstrating how to whip up our own cushions and the like on a shoestring budget. She's made no secret of the fact that Christmas is her favourite time of year, so it seems only fitting that she'd share her top tips for ensuring the big day goes with a bang. Kirstie explains how fast crafts can not only beat the clock but offer up a big impact, and first up, she's visiting a Christmas market. She speaks to expert artisans about how to make festive delights including mince pie popcorn with tree syrup and a rich red velvet Christmas cheesecake.

A Night of Heroes - The Military Awards
ITV, 9pm

Forget presenting This Morning or judging the acts on Britain's Got Talent - the highlight of Phillip Schofield and Amanda Holden's professional year is hosting this annual event. For the uninitiated, the event takes place at London's National Maritime Museum and is now in its sixth year. A total of 10 awards are given those who have made outstanding contributions to Britain's armed services. The accolades have been judged by a panel that includes Jeremy Clarkson, Andy McNab, Holly Willoughby and Lorraine Kelly, with support from four former military chiefs - General Sir Mike Jackson, Admiral Lord West, Field Marshal Lord Guthrie and ACM Sir Peter Squire.

TUESDAY

The Great British Bake Off Christmas Special BBC2, 8pm

It's been an amazing year for the Great British Bake Off. Back in October, a peak audience of 9.1 million viewers tuned in for the final, so no wonder it's getting a transfer to BBC One in time for the next series. But before they pack up their mixing bowls and switch channels, Mary and Paul are bringing us this Christmas special, which sees them sharing some of their favourite festive recipes, from old stand-bys like stollen and a gingerbread house to the slightly more unusual likes of Scottish black bun and Tunis cake. And they've also come up with an alternative to turkey sandwiches as a way of using up leftovers, in the form of Paul's hand-raised Boxing Day pie.

WEDNESDAY

Food & Drink Christmas Special BBC2, 8pm

It seems like every show that's ever been on telly has a Christmas special, but none are more justified than this - after all, good food and nice drinks really do go hand in hand with the festive season. And what will culinary legend Michel Roux Jr and award-winning drinks expert Kate Goodman be dishing up this year? Well, since they're joined by Great British Bake Off judge Mary Berry and Michelin-starred chef Glyn

Purnell, you know whatever it is will be something special. Sure enough, there's a look at how to roast the perfect goose, recipes for easy canapés, a spectacular sausage roll and a quick chocolate torte - as well as a boozy drinks round-up.

Surprise Surprise
ITV, 8pm

Granted, this series runs all year round, but really, there's no better time than Christmas to pay tribute to those who selflessly do so much for others without expecting anything in return. Clearly, Holly Willoughby and co have been thinking along the same lines because we've been treated to a festive edition of the popular show - and they've pulled out all the stops this time, getting some big names on board. James Colbourn has been nominated by his younger sister, Sadie, for all the support he's given her since she gave birth to twin boys at just 26 weeks. And his surprise surprise? Meeting Brinye Spears at The Savoy in London. Meanwhile, a Cher fan gets a special message, and Oly Murs provides music for the evening.

THURSDAY
Live Celebrity Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?
ITV, 9pm

Chris Tarrant recently suggested that this former

ratings-topper became a victim of the recession - in financially uncertain times, what contestants really wanted was to answer a few easy(ish) questions and go home with £10,000, rather than the chance to gamble their way to a million. But will the celebs on this live version prove a bit more willing to take a risk, or will the fact that they are playing for charity make them even more cautious? Well, one of the contestants, former Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson, definitely has a competitive streak, so he may be our best chance to see someone go all the way as he joins ubiquitous presenter and Reds fan Eamonn Holmes to play for their favourite good causes - and a viewer at home, who will have a chance to claim half the winnings.

FRIDAY
Text Santa
ITV, 8pm

It's only in its third year now, but already we feel like Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without Text Santa. This time around, the build-up towards the main event started early, with Davina McCall's summertime celeb dance show Stepping Out offering 15p from each vote to the cause, and This Morning's 'Take a Moment' campaign, which ran during the autumn contributing £167,390. And impressive though that is, it's nothing compared to what will be accomplished tonight, when presenting duos Ant and Dec, Holly Willoughby and Phillip Schofield, and Paddy McGuinness and Christine Bleakley step up for the marathon three-hour fundraising extravaganza, including star guests, sketches and the Big Reunion bands performing their charity single.

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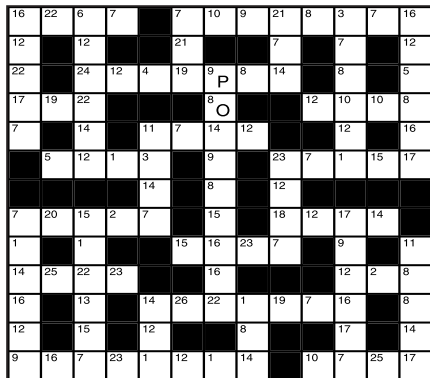
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Brain Gym

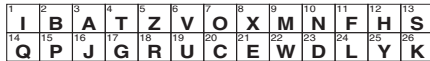
No.251

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:



Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

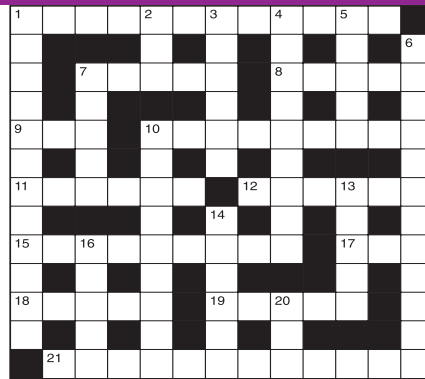
Cryptic Clues:

Across

- Picks out the fellow by the vessel showing shooting ability (12)
- Some of the extra inquiries for transport (5)
- This is used notwithstanding (5)
- Manage a continuous series of performances (3)
- Girl's name needs amending - pretends to be unfit (9)
- Emphasise the account requires money (6)
- The show is missing from an idyllic location (6)
- One friend is after the market in a hostile way (9)
- Drink produces endless sign of grief (3)
- A gently thrustful reminder (5)
- The brute will destroy the root vegetable (5)
- Regard as skilful - not to be dismissed lightly (12)

Down

- What no patient would suffer at the hands of an efficient doctor? (12)
- South Pacific always initially provides place for recuperation (3)
- The records will show fifty in Indian currency (6)
- Support a small railway that's not of prime importance (9)
- I find fault - this will make you angry (5)
- Go over to inspect what counsel has to do (5-7)
- Is this the keynote to health? (5)
- Wrinkles are apparent in the fellow's virility (9)
- Teacher loses his head and makes a bloomer! (5)
- Criticised the way the roof is covered (6)
- Is the broadcaster so active? (5)
- The iron rod is almost completely stripped (3)



Quick Clues:

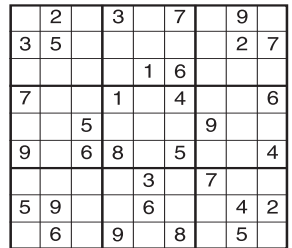
Across

- Private (12)
- Let (5)
- Watery (5)
- Small child (3)
- Impostor (9)
- Modern (6)
- Current (6)
- Postponed (9)
- Donkey (3)
- Leeway (5)
- Implied (5)
- Reproof (12)

Down

- Revokes (12)
- Sick (3)
- Envelop (6)
- Reduced to a synopsis (9)
- Ward off (5)
- Broadcast (12)
- Caper (5)
- Director of orchestra (9)
- Precise (5)
- Seize (6)
- Sap (5)
- Tin (3)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS:

6	5	1	7	4	9	2	3	5
5	3	7	1	2	8	9	6	4
9	2	4	5	3	6	7	1	8
2	8	5	3	7	1	6	4	9
4	7	9	8	6	2	1	5	3
6	1	3	4	9	5	8	7	2
7	4	8	9	1	3	5	2	6
3	5	2	6	8	7	4	9	1
1	9	6	2	5	4	3	8	7

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 4 Annoyed; 8 Pencil; 9 Stained; 10 Eleven; 11 Breath; 12 Distaste; 18 Rheostat; 20 Duenna; 21 Dimple; 22 Leakage; 23 In case; 24 Tonsure. Down: 1 Spreads; 2 Inverse; 3 Cinema; 5 Nota bene; 6 Opines; 7 Erects; 13 Stranger; 14 Stop-gap; 15 Steered; 16 Tuxedo; 17 Snakes; 19 Orient. QUICK - Across: 4 Account; 8 Airman; 9 Inflate; 10 Astute; 11 Regard; 12 Encircle; 18 Positive; 20 Patent; 21 Bridal; 22 Faction; 23 Relish; 24 Repress. Down: 1 Palaver; 2 Protect; 3 Matter; 5 Congress; 6 Oblige; 7 Nature; 13 Captious; 14 Disdain; 15 Wealthy; 16 Manage; 17 Better; 19 Israel.



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Late steal by Hales gives them the points

Worcester 2 OHHC 1sts 3
OLD Halesonians Hockey Club stole all three points in the dying minutes, to secure fourth place in Midlands 1 over Christmas, after a sensational game versus joint league leaders Worcester.

Worcester had several penalty corners, which were either off target or stopped by the Hales defence.

The second half was action packed, as both teams pushed for the win.

Hales who took the lead when Harry Hughes rounded the Worcester keeper, but was taken out as he was about to shoot into the empty net.

The Worcester keeper was yellow carded for 10 minutes, and a penalty flick awarded. Tom Bulteel stepped up, and easily slotted home. Worcester then grabbed an equaliser.

Hales who found the breakthrough when Chales Palmer scored. Worcester scored to level things.

Doug Houghton sealed the game. Other Results: OHHC Ladies 1sts 2 Barford Tigers 3; OHHC 2nds 4 Finchfield 1; Wednesday 5 OHHC 3rds 2; OHHC 4ths 0 Worcester 6 West Brom 7 OHHC 5ths 0; Badgers 5 Wolverhampton 1.

Ashton is goal getter once again

Tipton Town 2 Gornal Athletic 0
TIPTON Town eased past local rivals Gornal Athletic thanks to two goals by goal machine midfielder Danny Ashton.

But for an excellent performance in the Gornal goal by Luke Stevens and two second half encounters with the woodwork, Tipton might have come away from the game with a more decisive victory.

With many of the current Tipton squad having played under Ian Rowe during his successful spell as manager at Gornal, and with several of the Gornal players having played for Tipton, it was always likely to be a competitive affair.

Tipton pressure told on 53 minutes when yet again Stevens produced a great save to deny Connor Gater and Danny Ashton was there to prod home.

The advantage was doubled on 76 minutes when Ashton finally got the better of Stevens with a 25-yard shot on the turn.

Glassboys defeat as two goals burn 'em

Burnham 2 Stourbridge 0
GARY HACKETT'S men struggled to adapt to the bumpy pitch at Burnham and were hit by two goals from Ryan Blake.

In the third minute a cross from Lee Togwell picked out Aaron Couch and his rising shot from the left-hand side of the box hit the woodwork.

Stourbridge replied three minutes later with Kyle Haynes finding Aaron Drake with a throw-in on the right.

He threaded the ball through to Luke Benbow who flashed a low cross-shot past the far post. Soon

afterwards Couch burst through the left channel area for Burnham, however his low-angled shot was comfortably saved by Dean Coleman, however on nine minutes Stourbridge found themselves trailing.

A miscued shot from outside the box from Togwell ran invitingly through to Blake on the right of the area and he beat Coleman with a shot into the net.

Ten minutes later and with Jamie Oliver down requiring treatment, a loose clearance allowed Ryan Upward to hit a 25-yard shot wide of Coleman's left-

Football

hand post and then in the 26th minute Coleman got safely behind a Lewis Driver shot from the edge of the area.

Two minutes later Ryan Rowe went close with a glancing near post header from a Ben Billingham right-wing corner and then on 36 minutes Stourbridge had penalty shouts turned down after Billingham appeared to be caught and felled inside the box.

Four minutes before the break a Coleman kick was headed on by

Rowe into the path of Haynes who saw his chip fly over the bar.

The visitors introduced Kayelden Brown and then Roly Agbor in the first part of the second period as they adopted a more direct approach.

Rowe sliced a chance on the left-hand side of the area after being found by Billingham and then play switched quickly to the other end where Ashley Smith was played through.

Coleman came a long way towards the edge of his area and Smith attempted to lob the ball over him, but Coleman spread

himself well to make a save with the upper part of his chest.

The game grew increasingly stretched as Stourbridge tried to find an equaliser, but the Buckinghamshire hosts defended strongly.

Seven minutes into stoppage time Burnham wrapped up victory as Blake broke down the right and squared the ball inside to an unmarked Dan Malloy.

His stinging shot was parried by Coleman before Blake reacted quickest to turn the ball over the line to condemn the Glassboys to defeat.

Saxons pack in tries as they give visitors Hull

Stourbridge Saxons 54 Hull RUFC 0
VISITORS Hull suffered at the dominance of the Saxons' pack setting up eight tries, one scored by full back Tom Jarvis who was celebrating his 100th league appearance in club colours.

Jamie Hearn was first to cross the goal line, scoring and then converting a try created by Pete White's crossfield switch with centre Dan Thompson who was making his first start.

They struck again from the restart, Robbie Hurrell's catch setting up a driving maul that drew in Hull's forwards before Ben Barkley blasted through the defensive line.

The ball was recycled quickly to Nigel Mukarati who was held up but able to pass off the floor to Nile Dacres who powered over from short range.

With Hull opting not to commit numbers to the breakdowns it was another 20 minutes before the Saxons broke down their defences again, forcing a scrum penalty that was kicked to the corner.

Mike Hill was tackled just short of the line but the ball was recycled well through phases, the defence eventually running out of numbers as Mark George crashed through on a pick and drive.

Hull split the ball in the Saxons' midfield, it was worked left to Hearn who evaded several defenders before linking with Dacres.

A quick ruck ball was moved right to Barkley who spotted a mismatch in the defensive line and secured

Rugby

another clean line break before putting Jarvis through.

A Hurrell lineout take near halfway was worked to Stef Shillingford whose drive took out several defenders.

Gary Dipple spotted a gap in the fringe defences and darted through, finding White in support whose perfectly weighted long pass found Hearn free on the left.

A kick for the corner produced the next score when Ben Hughes barged over from short range after another lineout drill.

A set move saw replacement Tu'ipolatu feed scrum ball to Jarvis whose inside pass found Dipple.

He scorched through the line defence, swerving round one defender and handing off another to secure a superb 60m individual try.

The final score was another long-range effort, a scrum ball secured in the Saxons' half worked down the backline for Hearn to outpace his opponent and link to Shillingford.



Centre Ben Barkley on the attack with team mate Dan Thompson in support for the Saxons

Battling Old Hales keep on to the last

Old hales 2nds 29
Old Patesians 2nds 24

PATESIANs were first to score when a chip from centre Ben Perks was intercepted and they raced in front to lead.

OH replied with Al Church scoring in the corner.

A poor scrum from old Halesonians let Pats back in as they ran in under the posts.

Old hales came straight back when prop Chris Deeks drove over with the try converted by Tom Harris.

Gregg Smith was next to crash over. Old Pats levelled the scores making 19 all at half time.

From the restart Old Hales forced a scrum and fly half Chris Harris fed Church for his second try.

The Pats forwards came back to level again.

However, Old Hales weren't finished as Jack Keeling broke through the Old Pats defence with a strong run before Simon Sabell went over for the winning score.

Droitwich 7
Old Hales U-17s 30

Old hales dominated the play with tries from Ed Dando, Luke Jordan Dan Sanford and Chris Roberts.

Clarke aims to build up his standing

HALESOWEN Super Middleweight prospect, Lennox Clarke, is ready to build on his impressive start to professional boxing when he returns to action next week.

The 22 year-old enjoyed an explosive debut in the paid ranks when he blew away James Child inside two rounds last month.

Clarke takes on Didier Blanch on EdKO Promotions' Who Dares Wins Show at the Holiday Inn, Birmingham, on December 19. He was due to face the Congo-born boxer for his debut but Blanch was switched for Child at the 11th hour.

Because of that late switch, Clarke has already done his homework on his opponent and believes the extra time to prepare will stand him in good stead on fight night.

Tickets are £60 and include a three-course meal or £30 unreserved standard seating. Call 07540 990 166 or 07450 458 293.



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Give them Hull
Saxons pack in the
tries for a shutout
Page 31

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Going is heavy for runners in leg two

THE Birmingham and District Invitation Cross Country League held race two out of four at Stafford Common.

In Division 3 the mens A finished ninth and the B team finished second.

First to finish for the men was Adrian Hingley with 46.05, next was Rob Colman 46.36 and Kevin Burke 47.42.

Although the day was nice and dry, it was heavy underfoot and made it hard going.

The ladies were at Aldersley leisure village Wolverhampton also running in the Birmingham and District Invitation Cross Country League.

Representing the club was Natalie Dellar, Zoe Yeomans, Emma Cross, Wendy Bourne, Jane Tibbitts and Ruby Ooi.

We also had the Mortimer Forrest 10-mile hill race, held in Ludlow.

First for the club was Joan Clarke with a time of 1.46, followed by Paul Bradley 1.50 and Errol Cumberbatch 1.58. A tough race with 1,700ft of ascent!

And last results for the Sneyd Christmas Pudding Run, organised by Sneyd Striders Running Club.

A festive 10-mile run in Walsall. Steve Burch 1.17, Phil Elwell 1.23, and Jane Tibbitts 1.48.

Heaviest loss for DK pack

Sedgley Park 111 DK 15
THIS was Dudley Kingswinford's largest ever league defeat conceding 17 tries from a Sedgley Park pack that were rampant.

Every player in the DK team gave their all, but the gulf between the two teams in terms of experience and physicality was too wide.

No one epitomised their effort more than hooker Luke Greenwood closely followed by the second row pairing of Nick Murphy and skipper Ed Parry.

In the back row joint head coach Pete Knight led by example and was ably supported by his colleagues Danny Hawkins and Sam Pedley.

Replacement wing Ryan Smitheman snatched a good try with 10 minutes left and served the catalyst for a final onslaught to get a bonus try.

Despite the mounting scoreline DK continued to attack at every opportunity, and were rewarded with a Sam Pedley try.

Old Hales triumph over bigger squad

Old Hales 24 Longton 15

HALES played host to a determined Longton side who were a bigger team man for man.

Early exchanges saw the home side desperate to give a complete team performance. The pack held strong with rearranged front row, Pete Fitzgerald at Loose head, Dan Blake at hooker and skipper Rich Taylor returning on the tight head.

After nine minutes the forwards produced ball with centres Andy and Carl Robinson feeding off Steve Powell to put wing Luke Smith away in the corner for a well earned try.

Rugby

The home side continued to dominate and provide good ball to the backs.

Longton fought hard but were penalised twice in the first half which Hooper converted. The visitors came back with a well deserved try through their forwards.

After 20 minutes a scrum just in the Longton half saw Mark Evans feed Powell, who dummied and passed inside to centre Carl Robinson who broke through the defence, he fed Smith supporting on the wing for a brilliant try.

The second half seemed a closer contest

with Longton fighting back for an unconverted try through their forward power.

This was followed by a penalty for infringement which took the visitors to 16-14.

Shortly after this scrum half Nathan Jones was shown a red card by the referee who assessed that Jones had intentionally tried to kick an opposition player, he left the field. This could have been a copy of last week with Evans earlier receiving a yellow card for infringement.

But the home side lifted themselves again with some great driving runs by Loz Breeze, Tom Jordan and Pete Fitzgerald. The pres-

sure built again and camped in the Longton half.

Joe Oxford who steamed over for a try. From the kick off Hales didn't relax, the 14 men all doing their bit with more driving and hard yards made.

Longton were forced to give another penalty under the pressure, and Steve Powell converted to give OH a well-deserved win.

Hales sit fourth in the league with an away game against Newport this week before the Christmas break.

The kick-off 2.15pm and a supporters' coach is arranged.

Cradley Heathens are back

HEATHENS Speedway bosses have reverted to the Cradley Heath name for the 2014 season.

It means Cradley Heathens will ride in a competitive league for the first time since 1996 after replacing Dudley.

Management trio Nigel Pearson, Chris Van Straaten and Gary Patchett have also moved to assure fans it doesn't mean the end of their search for a new home in the area.

Heathens were reformed for the 2010 season from the ashes of the old Dudley Wood club – and the Dudley name was used with the intention of securing land in the borough. Pearson has revealed how the decision was taken at a management meeting with co-promoters Chris Van Straaten and Gary Patchett last week.

It's a decision which is sure to go down well with supporters, the majority of which come from the old Dudley Wood days.

Cradley were one of the glamour clubs of the 80s when thousands of fans flocked to the stadium every Saturday.

But when the site was demolished for housing, after one season in exile at Stoke the club closed.

Club chairman Nigel Pearson said: "We are agreed as a management that this is the way forward."

"We used the name Dudley because we weren't sure what the response would be, but it's clear the majority of our fan base are from the Cradley days."

"It's fair to say we are entering a make-or-break year for the current management to secure a new site – if we don't, then it will be down to the fans to decide whether they want Cradley to continue at Wolverhampton."

The Chronicle, a Midland News Association Ltd publication, printed by the company at Kettle, Telford, Thursday, December 12, 2013.

GLASSBOYS FA CUP DREAM DESTROYED

Stevenage 4 Stourbridge 0
STOURBRIDGE'S FA Cup dream is over for another year – but it could have been so different.

In the end, the extra organisation and fitness of Stevenage, 79 places and four tiers above them in the football ladder, told.

But the Glassboys know they could have pushed the League One side a lot closer if only they had taken their chances in a first half.

Stourbridge, backed by a noisy contingent of 809 fans, missed a one-on-one, had an effort disallowed and forced the only save of the opening period against a defence which for 45 minutes showed all the nerves and shakiness of a team that had lost three of their previous four games and conceded nine goals in the process.

Defending

Although they ultimately won at a canter, Stevenage's progress to the third round was largely down to the poor defending by Gary Hackett's side, and that the first two goals came at key times.

We were left to reflect on two more things that shaped the day: The superb backing from the Stourbridge fans and the reaction of Stevenage manager Graham Westley.

The many hundreds of supporters – more than double Stourbridge's normal home gate and over a third of Saturday's attendance – filled the South Stand behind the goal and made it an old-fashioned cup-tie atmosphere from start to finish with their non-stop chanting.

Luke Benbow had a golden chance in the second minute, but he fired wide

Football

from a one-on-one with keeper Chris Day.

That came after Lucas Akins glanced wide in a frenetic opening spell that saw Stevenage midfielder Michael Doughty booked for an ugly lunge on Drew Canavan.

He was then substituted in the 12th minute as Westley was concerned about the prospect of being reduced to 10 men.

By then, Stourbridge had the ball in the net when Leon Broadhurst scrambled home in the sixth minute following Ben Billingham's corner, only for the strike to be negated by an infringement.

Francois Zoko got the breakthrough a minute before the break when he headed home Luke Freeman's cross.

The game was anyone's at that stage but that all changed within four minutes of the restart when Akins got the killer goal that allowed the hosts to dictate the pace for the last half-hour.

Freeman buried a low close-range shot to make it 3-0 on the hour after more poor defending and Felipe Morais added a flattering fourth two minutes from time from the spot.



Glassboys' Leon Broadhurst heads home but his effort was disallowed

Pictures: Will Kilpatrick



Ryan Rowe, right, takes on Jimmy Smith



Players salute the fans at the end of the tie

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